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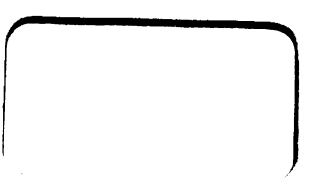

For your kindly willingness to
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H Wise

CHARACTER & OPINION

IN THE

UNITED STATES

WITH REMINISCENCES OF
WILLIAM JAMES AND JOSIAH ROYCE
AND ACADEMIC LIFE IN AMERICA

BY

GEORGE SANTAYANA

LATE PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1920

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PREFACE

THE major part of this book is composed of lectures originally addressed to British audiences. I have added a good deal, but I make no apology, now that the whole may fall under American eyes, for preserving the tone and attitude of a detached observer. Not at all on the ground that "to see ourselves as others see us" would be to see ourselves truly; on the contrary, I agree with Spinoza where he says that other people's idea of a man is apt to be a better expression of their nature than of his. I accept this principle in the present instance, and am willing it should be applied to the judgements contained in this book, in which the reader may see chiefly expressions of my own feelings and hints of my own opinions. Only an American—and I am not one except by long association [1]—can speak for the heart

[1] Perhaps I should add that I have not been in the United States since January 1912. My observations stretched, with some intervals, through the forty years preceding that date.

of America. I try to understand it, as a family friend may who has a different temperament; but it is only my own mind that I speak for at bottom, or wish to speak for. Certainly my sentiments are of little importance compared with the volume and destiny of the things I discuss here: yet the critic and artist too have their rights, and to take as calm and as long a view as possible seems to be but another name for the love of truth. Moreover, I suspect that my feelings are secretly shared by many people in America, natives and foreigners, who may not have the courage or the occasion to express them frankly. After all, it has been acquaintance with America and American philosophers that has chiefly contributed to clear and to settle my own mind. I have no axe to grind, only my thoughts to burnish, in the hope that some part of the truth of things may be reflected there; and I am confident of not giving serious offence to the judicious, because they will feel that it is affection for the American people that makes me wish that what is best and most beautiful should not be absent from their lives.

Civilisation is perhaps approaching one of

those long winters that overtake it from time to time. A flood of barbarism from below may soon level all the fair works of our Christian ancestors, as another flood two thousand years ago levelled those of the ancients. Romantic Christendom — picturesque, passionate, unhappy episode—may be coming to an end. Such a catastrophe would be no reason for despair. Nothing lasts for ever; but the elasticity of life is wonderful, and even if the world lost its memory it could not lose its youth. Under the deluge, and watered by it, seeds of all sorts would survive against the time to come, even if what might eventually spring from them, under the new circumstances, should wear a strange aspect. In a certain measure, and unintentionally, both this destruction and this restoration have already occurred in America. There is much forgetfulness, much callow disrespect for what is past or alien; but there is a fund of vigour, goodness, and hope such as no nation ever possessed before. In what sometimes looks like American greediness and jostling for the front place, all is love of achievement, nothing is unkindness; it is a fearless people, and free from malice, as you

might see in their eyes and gestures, even if their conduct did not prove it. This soil is propitious to every seed, and tares must needs grow in it; but why should it not also breed clear thinking, honest judgement, and rational happiness? These things are indeed not necessary to existence, and without them America might long remain rich and populous like many a barbarous land in the past; but in that case its existence would be hounded, like theirs, by falsity and remorse. May Heaven avert the omen, and make the new world a better world than the old! In the classical and romantic tradition of Europe, love, of which there was very little, was supposed to be kindled by beauty, of which there was a great deal: perhaps moral chemistry may be able to reverse this operation, and in the future and in America it may breed beauty out of love.

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CHAPTER I

THE MORAL BACKGROUND

About the middle of the nineteenth century, in the quiet sunshine of provincial prosperity, New England had an Indian summer of the mind; and an agreeable reflective literature showed how brilliant that russet and yellow season could be. There were poets, historians, orators, preachers, most of whom had studied foreign literatures and had travelled; they demurely kept up with the times; they were universal humanists. But it was all a harvest of leaves; these worthies had an expurgated and barren conception of life; theirs was the purity of sweet old age. Sometimes they made attempts to rejuvenate their minds by broaching native subjects; they wished to prove how much matter for poetry the new world supplied, and they wrote "Rip van Winkle," "Hia-

watha," or "Evangeline"; but the inspiration did not seem much more American than that of Swift or Ossian or Châteaubriand. These cultivated writers lacked native roots and fresh sap because the American intellect itself lacked them. Their culture was half a pious survival, half an intentional acquirement; it was not the inevitable flowering of a fresh experience. Later there have been admirable analytic novelists who have depicted American life as it is, but rather bitterly, rather sadly; as if the joy and the illusion of it did not inspire them, but only an abstract interest in their own art. If any one, like Walt Whitman, penetrated to the feelings and images which the American scene was able to breed out of itself, and filled them with a frank and broad afflatus of his own, there is no doubt that he misrepresented the conscious minds of cultivated Americans; in them the head as yet did not belong to the trunk.

Nevertheless, *belles-lettres* in the United States—which after all stretch beyond New England—have always had two points of contact with the great national experiment.

One point of contact has been oratory, with that sort of poetry, patriotic, religious, or moral, which has the function of oratory. Eloquence is a republican art, as conversation is an aristocratic one. By eloquence at public meetings and dinners, in the pulpit or in the press, the impulses of the community could be brought to expression; consecrated maxims could be reapplied; the whole latent manliness and shrewdness of the nation could be mobilised. In the form of oratory reflection, rising out of the problems of action, could be turned to guide or to sanction action, and sometimes could attain, in so doing, a notable elevation of thought. Although Americans, and many other people, usually say that thought is for the sake of action, it has evidently been in these high moments, when action became incandescent in thought, that they have been most truly alive, intensively most active, and although *doing* nothing, have found at last that their existence was worth while. Reflection is itself a turn, and the top turn, given to life. Here is the second point at which literature in America has fused with the activities of the nation: it

has paused to enjoy them. Every animal has his festive and ceremonious moments, when he poses or plumes himself or thinks; sometimes he even sings and flies aloft in a sort of ecstasy. Somewhat in the same way, when reflection in man becomes dominant, it may become passionate; it may create religion or philosophy — adventures often more thrilling than the humdrum experience they are supposed to interrupt.

This pure flame of mind is nothing new, superadded, or alien in America. It is notorious how metaphysical was the passion that drove the Puritans to those shores; they went there in the hope of living more perfectly in the spirit. And their pilgrim's progress was not finished when they had founded their churches in the wilderness; an endless migration of the mind was still before them, a flight from those new idols and servitudes which prosperity involves, and the eternal lure of spiritual freedom and truth. The moral world always contains undiscovered or thinly peopled continents open to those who are more attached to what might or should be than to what already is. Americans are eminently pro-

phets; they apply morals to public affairs; they are impatient and enthusiastic. Their judgements have highly speculative implications, which they often make explicit; they are men with principles, and fond of stating them. Moreover, they have an intense self-reliance; to exercise private judgement is not only a habit with them but a conscious duty. Not seldom personal conversions and mystical experiences throw their ingrained faith into novel forms, which may be very bold and radical. They are traditionally exercised about religion, and adrift on the subject more than any other people on earth; and if religion is a dreaming philosophy, and philosophy a waking religion, a people so wide awake and so religious as the old Yankees ought certainly to have been rich in philosophers.

In fact, philosophy in the good old sense of curiosity about the nature of things, with readiness to make the best of them, has not been absent from the practice of Americans or from their humorous moods; their humour and shrewdness are sly comments on the shortcomings of some polite convention that everybody accepts tacitly, yet feels to

be insecure and contrary to the principles on which life is actually carried on. Nevertheless, with the shyness which simple competence often shows in the presence of conventional shams, these wits have not taken their native wisdom very seriously. They have not had the leisure nor the intellectual scope to think out and defend the implications of their homely perceptions. Their fresh insight has been whispered in parentheses and asides; it has been humbly banished, in alarm, from their solemn moments. What people have respected have been rather scraps of official philosophy, or entire systems, which they have inherited or imported, as they have respected operas and art museums. To be on speaking terms with these fine things was a part of social respectability, like having family silver. High thoughts must be at hand, like those candlesticks, probably candleless, sometimes displayed as a seemly ornament in a room blazing with electric light. Even in William James, spontaneous and stimulating as he was, a certain underlying discomfort was discernible; he had come out into the open, into what should have been the sunshine,

but the vast shadow of the temple still stood between him and the sun. He was worried about what *ought* to be believed and the awful deprivations of disbelieving. What he called the cynical view of anything had first to be brushed aside, without stopping to consider whether it was not the true one; and he was bent on finding new and empirical reasons for clinging to free-will, departed spirits, and tutelary gods. Nobody, except perhaps in this last decade, has tried to bridge the chasm between what he believes in daily life and the "problems" of philosophy. Nature and science have not been ignored, and "practice" in some schools has been constantly referred to; but instead of supplying philosophy with its data they have only constituted its difficulties; its function has been not to build on known facts but to explain them away. Hence a curious alternation and irrelevance, as between weekdays and Sabbaths, between American ways and American opinions.

That philosophy should be attached to tradition would be a great advantage, conducive to mutual understanding, to maturity, and to progress, if the tradition lay in the

highway of truth. To deviate from it in that case would be to betray the fact that, while one might have a lively mind, one was not master of the subject. Unfortunately, in the nineteenth century, in America as elsewhere, the ruling tradition was not only erratic and far from the highway of truth, but the noonday of this tradition was over, and its classic forms were outgrown. A philosophy may have a high value, other than its truth to things, in its truth to method and to the genius of its author; it may be a feat of synthesis and imagination, like a great poem, expressing one of the eternal possibilities of being, although one which the creator happened to reject when he made this world. It is possible to be a master in false philosophy—easier, in fact, than to be a master in the truth, because a false philosophy can be made as simple and consistent as one pleases. Such had been the masters of the tradition prevalent in New England—Calvin, Hume, Fichte, not to mention others more relished because less pure; but one of the disadvantages of such perfection in error is that the illusion is harder to transmit to another age and

country. If Jonathan Edwards, for instance, was a Calvinist of pristine force and perhaps the greatest *master* in false philosophy that America has yet produced, he paid the price by being abandoned, even in his lifetime, by his own sect, and seeing the world turn a deaf ear to his logic without so much as attempting to refute it. One of the peculiarities of recent speculation, especially in America, is that ideas are abandoned in virtue of a mere change of feeling, without any new evidence or new arguments. We do not nowadays refute our predecessors, we pleasantly bid them good-bye. Even if all our principles are unwittingly traditional we do not like to bow openly to authority. Hence masters like Calvin, Hume, or Fichte rose before their American admirers like formidable ghosts, foreign and unseizable. People refused to be encumbered with any system, even one of their own; they were content to imbibe more or less of the spirit of a philosophy and to let it play on such facts as happened to attract their attention. The originality even of Emerson and of William James was of this incidental character; they

found new approaches to old beliefs or new expedients in old dilemmas. They were not in a scholastic sense pupils of anybody or masters in anything. They hated the scholastic way of saying what they meant, if they had heard of it; they insisted on a personal freshness of style, refusing to make their thought more precise than it happened to be spontaneously; and they lisped their logic, when the logic came.

We must remember that ever since the days of Socrates, and especially after the establishment of Christianity, the dice of thought have been loaded. Certain pledges have preceded inquiry and divided the possible conclusions beforehand into the acceptable and the inacceptable, the edifying and the shocking, the noble and the base. Wonder has no longer been the root of philosophy, but sometimes impatience at having been cheated and sometimes fear of being undeceived. The marvel of existence, in which the luminous and the opaque are so romantically mingled, no longer lay like a sea open to intellectual adventure, tempting the mind to conceive some bold and curious system of the universe, on the

analogy of what had been so far discovered. Instead, people were confronted with an orthodoxy—though not always the same orthodoxy — whispering mysteries and brandishing anathemas. Their wits were absorbed in solving traditional problems, many of them artificial and such as the ruling orthodoxy had created by its gratuitous assumptions. Difficulties were therefore found in some perfectly obvious truths; and obvious fables, if they were hallowed by association, were seriously weighed in the balance against one another or against the facts; and many an actual thing was proved to be impossible, or was hidden under a false description. In conservative schools the student learned and tried to fathom the received solutions; in liberal schools he was perhaps invited to seek solutions of his own, but still to the old questions. Freedom, when nominally allowed, was a provisional freedom; if your wanderings did not somehow bring you back to orthodoxy you were a misguided being, no matter how disparate from the orthodox might be the field from which you fetched your little harvest; and if you could not be answered you were called superficial.

Most spirits are cowed by such disparagement; but even those who snap their fingers at it do not escape; they can hardly help feeling that in calling a spade a spade they are petulant and naughty; or if their inspiration is too genuine for that, they still unwittingly shape their opinions in contrast to those that claim authority, and therefore on the same false lines—a terrible tax to pay to the errors of others; and it is only here and there that a very great and solitary mind, like that of Spinoza, can endure obloquy without bitterness or can pass through perverse controversies without contagion.

Under such circumstances it is obvious that speculation can be frank and happy only where orthodoxy has receded, abandoning a larger and larger field to unprejudiced inquiry; or else (as has happened among liberal Protestants) where the very heart of orthodoxy has melted, has absorbed the most alien substances, and is ready to bloom into anything that anybody finds attractive. This is the secret of that extraordinary vogue which the transcendental philosophy has had for nearly a century in Great Britain

and America; it is a method which enables a man to renovate all his beliefs, scientific and religious, from the inside, giving them a new status and interpretation as phases of his own experience or imagination; so that he does not seem to himself to reject anything, and yet is bound to nothing, except to his creative self. Many too who have no inclination to practise this transcendental method—a personal, arduous, and futile art, which requires to be renewed at every moment—have been impressed with the results or the maxims of this or that transcendental philosopher, such as that every opinion leads on to another that reinterprets it, or every evil to some higher good that contains it; and they have managed to identify these views with what still seemed to them vital in religion.

In spite of this profound mutation at the core, and much paring at the edges, traditional belief in New England retained its continuity and its priestly unction; and religious teachers and philosophers could slip away from Calvinism and even from Christianity without any loss of elevation or austerity. They found it so pleasant

and easy to elude the past that they really had no quarrel with it. The world, they felt, was a safe place, watched over by a kindly God, who exacted nothing but cheerfulness and good-will from his children; and the American flag was a sort of rainbow in the sky, promising that all storms were over. Or if storms came, such as the Civil War, they would not be harder to weather than was necessary to test the national spirit and raise it to a new efficiency. The subtler dangers which we may now see threatening America had not yet come in sight—material restlessness was not yet ominous, the pressure of business enterprises was not yet out of scale with the old life or out of key with the old moral harmonies. A new type of American had not appeared—the untrained, pushing, cosmopolitan orphan, cock-sure in manner but not too sure in his morality, to whom the old Yankee, with his sour integrity, is almost a foreigner. Was not "increase," in the Bible, a synonym for benefit? Was not "abundance" the same, or almost the same, as happiness?

Meantime the churches, a little ashamed of their past, began to court the good opinion

of so excellent a world. Although called evangelical, they were far, very far, from prophesying its end, or offering a refuge from it, or preaching contempt for it; they existed only to serve it, and their highest divine credential was that the world needed them. Irreligion, dissoluteness, and pessimism—supposed naturally to go together—could never prosper; they were incompatible with efficiency. That was the supreme test. "Be Christians," I once heard a president of Yale College cry to his assembled pupils, "be Christians and you will be successful." Religion was indispensable and sacred, when not carried too far; but theology might well be unnecessary. Why distract this world with talk of another? Enough for the day was the good thereof. Religion should be disentangled as much as possible from history and authority and metaphysics, and made to rest honestly on one's fine feelings, on one's indomitable optimism and trust in life. Revelation was nothing miraculous, given once for all in some remote age and foreign country; it must come to us directly, and with greater authority now than ever before. If evolution was to be taken seriously and to

include moral growth, the great men of the past could only be stepping-stones to our own dignity. To grow was to contain and sum up all the good that had gone before, adding an appropriate increment. Undoubtedly some early figures were beautiful, and allowances had to be made for local influences in Palestine, a place so much more primitive and backward than Massachusetts. Jesus was a prophet more winsome and nearer to ourselves than his predecessors; but how could any one deny that the twenty centuries of progress since his time must have raised a loftier pedestal for Emerson or Channing or Phillips Brooks? It might somehow not be in good taste to put this feeling into clear words; one and perhaps two of these men would have deprecated it; nevertheless it beamed with refulgent self-satisfaction in the lives and maxims of most of their followers.

All this liberalism, however, never touched the centre of traditional orthodoxy, and those who, for all their modernness, felt that they inherited the faith of their fathers and were true to it were fundamentally right. There was still an orthodoxy among American highbrows at the end of the nineteenth century,

dissent from which was felt to be scandalous; it consisted in holding that the universe exists and is governed for the sake of man or of the human spirit. This persuasion, arrogant as it might seem, is at bottom an expression of impotence rather than of pride. The soul is originally vegetative; it feels the weal and woe of what occurs within the body. With locomotion and the instinct to hunt and to flee, animals begin to notice external things also; but the chief point noticed about them is whether they are good or bad, friendly or hostile, far or near. The station of the animal and his interests thus become the measure of all things for him, in so far as he knows them; and this aspect of them is, by a primitive fatality, the heart of them to him. It is only reason that can discount these childish perspectives, neutralise the bias of each by collating it with the others, and masterfully conceive the field in which their common objects are deployed, discovering also the principle of foreshortening or projection which produces each perspective in turn. But reason is a later comer into this world, and weak; against its suasion stands the mighty resistance of habit and of

moral presumption. It is in their interest, and to rehabilitate the warm vegetative autonomy of the primitive soul, that orthodox religion and philosophy labour in the western world—for the mind of India cannot be charged with this folly. Although inwardly these systems have not now a good conscience and do not feel very secure (for they are retrograde and sin against the light), yet outwardly they are solemn and venerable; and they have incorporated a great deal of moral wisdom with their egotism or humanism—more than the Indians with their respect for the infinite. In deifying human interests they have naturally studied and expressed them justly, whereas those who perceive the relativity of human goods are tempted to scorn them—which is itself unreasonable—and to sacrifice them all to the single passion of worship or of despair. Hardly anybody, except possibly the Greeks at their best, has realised the sweetness and glory of being a rational animal.

The Jews, as we know, had come to think that it was the creator of the world, the God of the universe, who had taken them for his chosen people. Christians in turn had

asserted that it was God in person who, having become a man, had founded their church. According to this Hebraic tradition, the dignity of man did not lie in being a mind (which he undoubtedly is) but in being a creature materially highly favoured, with a longer life and a brighter destiny than other creatures in the world. It is remarkable how deep, in the Hebraic religions, is this interest in material existence; so deep that we are surprised when we discover that, according to the insight of other races, this interest is the essence of irreligion. Some detachment from existence and from hopes of material splendour has indeed filtered into Christianity through Platonism. Socrates and his disciples admired this world, but they did not particularly covet it, or wish to live long in it, or expect to improve it; what they cared for was an idea or a good which they found expressed in it, something outside it and timeless, in which the contemplative intellect might be literally absorbed. This philosophy was no less humanistic than that of the Jews, though in a less material fashion: if it did not read the universe in terms of thrift, it read it in terms of art. The pursuit

of a good, such as is presumably aimed at in human action, was supposed to inspire every movement in nature; and this good, for the sake of which the very heavens revolved, was akin to the intellectual happiness of a Greek sage. Nature was a philosopher in pursuit of an idea. Natural science then took a moralising turn which it has not yet quite outgrown. Socrates required of astronomy, if it was to be true science, that it should show why *it was best* that the sun and moon should be as they are; and Plato, refining on this, assures us that the eyes are placed in the front of the head, rather than at the back, because the front is the nobler quarter, and that the intestines are long in order that we may have leisure between meals to study philosophy. Curiously enough, the very enemies of final causes sometimes catch this infection and attach absolute values to facts in an opposite sense and in an inhuman interest; and you often hear in America that whatever is is right. These naturalists, while they rebuke the moralists for thinking that nature is ruled magically for our good, think her adorable for being ruled, in scorn of us, only by her own laws;

and thus we oscillate between egotism and idolatry.

The Reformation did not reform this belief in the cosmic supremacy of man, or the humanity of God; on the contrary, it took it (like so much else) in terrible German earnest, not suffering it any longer to be accepted somewhat lightly as a classical figure of speech or a mystery resting on revelation. The human race, the chosen people, the Christian elect were like tabernacle within tabernacle for the spirit; but in the holy of holies was the spirit itself, one's own spirit and experience, which was the centre of everything. Protestant philosophy, exploring the domain of science and history with confidence, and sure of finding the spirit walking there, was too conscientious to misrepresent what it found. As the terrible facts could not be altered they had to be undermined. By turning psychology into metaphysics this could be accomplished, and we could reach the remarkable conclusion that the human spirit was not so much the purpose of the universe as its seat, and the only universe there was.

This conclusion, which sums up idealism

on its critical or scientific side, would not of itself give much comfort to religious minds, that usually crave massive support rather than sublime independence; it leads to the heroic egotism of Fichte or Nietzsche rather than to any green pastures beside any still waters. But the critical element in idealism can be used to destroy belief in the natural world; and by so doing it can open the way to another sort of idealism, not at all critical, which might be called the higher superstition. This views the world as an oracle or charade, concealing a dramatic unity, or formula, or maxim, which all experience exists to illustrate. The habit of regarding existence as a riddle, with a surprising solution which we think we have found, should be the source of rather mixed emotions; the facts remain as they were, and rival solutions may at any time suggest themselves; and the one we have hit on may not, after all, be particularly comforting. The Christian may find himself turned by it into a heathen, the humanist into a pantheist, and the hope with which we instinctively faced life may be chastened into mere conformity. Nevertheless, however chilling and

inhuman our higher superstition may prove, it will make us feel that we are masters of a mystical secret, that we have a faith to defend, and that, like all philosophers, we have taken a ticket in a lottery in which if we hit on the truth, even if it seems a blank, we shall have drawn the first prize.

Orthodoxy in New England, even so transformed and attenuated, did not of course hold the field alone. There are materialists by instinct in every age and country; there are always private gentlemen whom the clergy and the professors cannot deceive. Here and there a medical or scientific man, or a man of letters, will draw from his special pursuits some hint of the nature of things at large; or a political radical will nurse undying wrath against all opinions not tartly hostile to church and state. But these clever people are not organised, they are not always given to writing, nor speculative enough to make a system out of their convictions. The enthusiasts and the pedagogues naturally flock to the other camp. The very competence which scientific people and connoisseurs have in their special fields disinclines them to generalise, or renders their

generalisations one-sided; so that their speculations are extraordinarily weak and stammering. Both by what they represent and by what they ignore they are isolated and deprived of influence, since only those who are at home in a subject can feel the force of analogies drawn from that field, whereas any one can be swayed by sentimental and moral appeals, by rhetoric and unction. Furthermore, in America the materialistic school is without that support from popular passions which it draws in many European countries from its association with anti-clericalism or with revolutionary politics; and it also lacks the maturity, self-confidence, and refinement proper in older societies to the great body of Epicurean and disenchanted opinion, where for centuries wits, critics, minor philosophers, and men of the world have chuckled together over their Horace, their Voltaire, and their Gibbon. The horror which the theologians have of infidelity passes therefore into the average American mind unmitigated by the suspicion that anything pleasant could lie in that quarter, much less the open way to nature and truth and a secure happiness.

There is another handicap, of a more technical sort, under which naturalistic philosophy labours in America, as it does in England; it has been crossed by scepticism about the validity of perception and has become almost identical with psychology. Of course, for any one who thinks naturalistically (as the British empiricists did in the beginning, like every unsophisticated mortal), psychology is the description of a very superficial and incidental complication in the animal kingdom: it treats of the curious sensibility and volatile thoughts awakened in the mind by the growth and fortunes of the body. In noting these thoughts and feelings, we can observe how far they constitute true knowledge of the world in which they arise, how far they ignore it, and how far they play with it, by virtue of the poetry and the syntax of discourse which they add out of their own exuberance; for fancy is a very fertile treacherous thing, as every one finds when he dreams. But dreams run over into waking life, and sometimes seem to permeate and to underlie it; and it was just this suspicion that he might be dreaming awake, that discourse and

tradition might be making a fool of him, that prompted the hard-headed Briton, even before the Reformation, to appeal from conventional beliefs to "experience." He was anxious to clear away those sophistries and impostures of which he was particularly apprehensive, in view of the somewhat foreign character of his culture and religion. Experience, he thought, would bear unimpeachable witness to the nature of things; for by experience he understood knowledge produced by direct contact with the object. Taken in this sense, experience is a method of discovery, an exercise of intelligence; it is the same observation of things, strict, cumulative, and analytic, which produces the natural sciences. It rests on naturalistic assumptions (since we know when and where we find our data) and could not fail to end in materialism. What prevented British empiricism from coming to this obvious conclusion was a peculiarity of the national temperament. The Englishman is not only distrustful of too much reasoning and too much theory (and science and materialism involve a good deal of both), but he is also fond of musing and of withdrawing into

his inner man. Accordingly his empiricism took an introspective form; like Hamlet he stopped at the *how*; he began to think about thinking. His first care was now to arrest experience as he underwent it; though its presence could not be denied, it came in such a questionable shape that it could not be taken at its word. This mere presence of experience, this ghostly apparition to the inner man, was all that empirical philosophy could now profess to discover. Far from being an exercise of intelligence, it retracted all understanding, all interpretation, all instinctive faith; far from furnishing a sure record of the truths of nature, it furnished a set of pathological facts, the passive subject-matter of psychology. These now seemed the only facts admissible, and psychology, for the philosophers, became the only science. Experience could discover nothing, but all discoveries had to be retracted, so that they should revert to the fact of experience and terminate there. Evidently when the naturalistic background and meaning of experience have dropped out in this way, empiricism is a form of idealism, since whatever objects we can come upon will all be

a priori and *a fortiori* and *sensu eminentiori* ideal in the mind. The irony of logic actually made English empiricism, understood in this psychological way, the starting-point for transcendentalism and for German philosophy.

Between these two senses of the word experience, meaning sometimes contact with things and at other times absolute feeling, the empirical school in England and America has been helplessly torn, without ever showing the courage or the self-knowledge to choose between them. I think we may say that on the whole their view has been this: that feelings or ideas were absolute atoms of existence, without any ground or source, so that the elements of their universe were all mental; but they conceived these psychical elements to be deployed in a physical time and even (since there were many simultaneous series of them) in some sort of space. These philosophers were accordingly idealists about substance but naturalists about the order and relations of existences; and experience on their lips meant feeling when they were thinking of particulars, but when they were thinking broadly, in

matters of history or science, experience meant the universal nebula or cataract which these feelings composed—itself no object of experience, but one believed in and very imperfectly presented in imagination. These men believed in nature, and were materialists at heart and to all practical purposes; but they were shy intellectually, and seemed to think they ran less risk of error in holding a thing covertly than in openly professing it.

If any one, like Herbert Spencer, kept psychology in its place and in that respect remained a pure naturalist, he often forfeited this advantage by enveloping the positive information he derived from the sciences in a whirlwind of generalisations. The higher superstition, the notion that nature dances to the tune of some comprehensive formula or some magic rhyme, thus reappeared among those who claimed to speak for natural science. In their romantic sympathy with nature they attributed to her an excessive sympathy with themselves; they overlooked her infinite complications and continual irony, and candidly believed they could measure her with their thumb-rules. Why should philosophers drag a toy-net of

words, fit to catch butterflies, through the sea of being, and expect to land all the fish in it? Why not take note simply of what the particular sciences can as yet tell us of the world? Certainly, when put together, they already yield a very wonderful, very true, and very sufficient picture of it. Are we impatient of knowing everything? But even if science was much enlarged it would have limits, both in penetration and in extent; and there would always remain, I will not say an infinity of unsolved problems (because "problems" are created by our impatience or our contradictions), but an infinity of undiscovered facts. Nature is like a beautiful woman that may be as delightfully and as truly known at a certain distance as upon a closer view; as to knowing her through and through, that is nonsense in both cases, and might not reward our pains. The love of all-inclusiveness is as dangerous in philosophy as in art. The savour of nature can be enjoyed by us only through our own senses and insight, and an outline map of the entire universe, even if it was not fabulously concocted, would not tell us much that was worth knowing

about the outlying parts of it. Without suggesting for a moment that the proper study of mankind is man only—for it may be landscape or mathematics—we may safely say that their proper study is what lies within their range and is interesting to them. For this reason the moralists who consider principally human life and paint nature only as a background to their figures are apt to be better philosophers than the speculative naturalists. In human life we are at home, and our views on it, if one-sided, are for that very reason expressive of our character and fortunes. An unfortunate peculiarity of naturalistic philosophers is that usually they have but cursory and wretched notions of the inner life of the mind; they are dead to patriotism and to religion, they hate poetry and fancy and passion and even philosophy itself; and therefore (especially if their science too, as often happens, is borrowed and vague) we need not wonder if the academic and cultivated world despises them, and harks back to the mythology of Plato or Aristotle or Hegel, who at least were conversant with the spirit of man.

Philosophers are very severe towards other philosophers because they expect too much. Even under the most favourable circumstances no mortal can be asked to seize the truth in its wholeness or at its centre. As the senses open to us only partial perspectives, taken from one point of view, and report the facts in symbols which, far from being adequate to the full nature of what surrounds us, resemble the coloured signals of danger or of free way which a railway engine-driver peers at in the night, so our speculation, which is a sort of panoramic sense, approaches things peripherally and expresses them humanly. But how doubly dyed in this subjectivity must our thought be when an orthodoxy dominant for ages has twisted the universe into the service of moral interests, and when even the heretics are entangled in a scepticism so partial and arbitrary that it substitutes psychology, the most derivative and dubious of sciences, for the direct intelligent reading of experience! But this strain of subjectivity is not in all respects an evil; it is a warm purple dye. When a way of thinking is deeply rooted in the soil, and embodies the instincts

or even the characteristic errors of a people, it has a value quite independent of its truth; it constitutes a phase of human life and can powerfully affect the intellectual drama in which it figures. It is a value of this sort that attaches to modern philosophy in general, and very particularly to the American thinkers I am about to discuss. There would be a sort of irrelevance and unfairness in measuring them by the standards of pure science or even of a classic sagacity, and reproaching them for not having reached perfect consistency or fundamental clearness. Men of intense feeling—and others will hardly count—are not mirrors but lights. If pure truth happened to be what they passionately desired, they would seek it single-mindedly, and in matters within their competence they would probably find it; but the desire for pure truth, like any other, must wait to be satisfied until its organ is ripe and the conditions are favourable. The nineteenth century was not a time and America was not a place where such an achievement could be expected. There the wisest felt themselves to be, as they were, questioners and apostles rather than

serene philosophers. We should not pay them the doubtful compliment of attributing to them merits alien to their tradition and scope, as if the nobleness they actually possessed—their conscience, vigour, timeliness, and influence—were not enough.

CHAPTER II

THE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

DURING some twenty-five years—from about 1885 to 1910—there was at Harvard College an interesting congregation of philosophers. Why at Harvard in particular? So long as philosophy is the free pursuit of wisdom, it arises wherever men of character and penetration, each with his special experience or hobby, look about them in this world. That philosophers should be professors is an accident, and almost an anomaly. Free reflection about everything is a habit to be imitated, but not a subject to expound; and an original system, if the philosopher has one, is something dark, perilous, untested, and not ripe to be taught, nor is there much danger that any one will learn it. The genuine philosopher—as Royce liked to say, quoting the Upanishads—wanders alone like

the rhinoceros. He may be followed, as he may have been anticipated; and he may even be accompanied, though there is as much danger as stimulus to him in flying with a flock. In his disputations, if he is drawn into them, he will still be soliloquising, and meeting not the arguments persuasive to others, but only such a version of them as his own thought can supply. The value of his questions and answers, as Socrates knew so well, will lie wholly in the monition of the argument developing within him and carrying him whithersoever it will, like a dream or like a god. If philosophers must earn their living and not beg (which some of them have thought more consonant with their vocation), it would be safer for them to polish lenses like Spinoza, or to sit in a black skull-cap and white beard at the door of some unfrequented museum, selling the catalogues and taking in the umbrellas; these innocent ways of earning their bread-card in the future republic would not prejudice their meditations and would keep their eyes fixed, without undue affection, on a characteristic bit of that real world which it is their business to understand. Or if,

being mild and bookish, it is thought they ought to be teachers, they might teach something else than philosophy; or if philosophy is the only thing they are competent to teach, it might at least not be their own, but some classic system with which, and against which, mankind is already inoculated —preferably the civilised ethics and charming myths of Plato and Aristotle, which everybody will be the better for knowing and few the worse for believing. At best, the true philosopher can fulfil his mission very imperfectly, which is to pilot himself, or at most a few voluntary companions who may find themselves in the same boat. It is not easy for him to shout, or address a crowd; he must be silent for long seasons; for he is watching stars that move slowly and in courses that it is possible though difficult to foresee; and he is crushing all things in his heart as in a winepress, until his life and their secret flow out together.

The tendency to gather and to breed philosophers in universities does not belong to ages of free and humane reflection: it is scholastic and proper to the Middle Ages and to Germany. And the reason is not far to

seek. When there is a philosophical orthodoxy, and speculation is expected to be a reasoned defence of some funded inspiration, it becomes itself corporate and traditional, and requires centres of teaching, endowment, and propaganda. Fundamental questions have been settled by the church, the government, or the Zeitgeist, and the function of the professor, himself bred in that school, is to transmit its lore to the next generation, with such original touches of insight or eloquence as he may command. To maintain and elucidate such a tradition, all the schools and universities of Christendom were originally founded; and if philosophy seemed sometimes to occupy but a small place in them—as for instance in the old-fashioned American college—it was only because the entire discipline and instruction of the place were permeated with a particular system of faith and morals, which it was almost superfluous to teach in the abstract. In those universities where philosophical controversy is rife, its traditional and scholastic character is no less obvious; it lives less on meditation than on debate, and turns on proofs, objections, paradoxes, or expedients for seeming

to re-establish everything that had come to seem clearly false, by some ingenious change of front or some twist of dialectic. Its subject-matter is not so much what is known of the world, as what often very ignorant philosophers have said in answer to one another; or else, when the age is out of patience with scholasticism, orthodoxy may take refuge in intuition, and for fear of the letter without the spirit, may excuse itself from considering at all what is logical or probable, in order to embrace whatever seems most welcome and comforting. The sweet homilies of the professors then become clerical, genteel, and feminine.

Harvard College had been founded to rear puritan divines, and as Calvinism gradually dissolved, it left a void there and as it were a mould, which a philosophy expressing the same instincts in a world intellectually transformed could flow into and fill almost without knowing it. Corporate bodies are like persons, long vaguely swayed by early impressions they may have forgotten. Even when changes come over the spirit of their dream, a sense of the mission to which they were first dedicated lingers about them, and

may revive, like the antiquarian and poetic Catholicism of Oxford in the nineteenth century. In academic America the Platonic and Catholic traditions had never been planted; it was only the Calvinistic tradition, when revived in some modern disguise, that could stir there the secret cord of reverence and enthusiasm. Harvard was the seminary and academy for the inner circle of Bostonians, and naturally responded to all the liberal and literary movements of which Boston was the centre. In religion it became first unitarian and afterwards neutral; in philosophy it might long have been satisfied with what other New England colleges found sufficient, namely such lofty views as the president, usually a clergyman, could introduce into his baccalaureate sermons, or into the course of lectures he might give for seniors on the evidences of Christianity or on the theory of evolution. Such philosophical initiation had sufficed for the distinguished literary men of the middle of the century, and even for so deep a sage as Emerson. But things cannot stand still, and Boston, as is well known, is not an ordinary place. When the impulse to

domestic literary expression seemed to be exhausted, intellectual ambition took other forms. It was an age of science, of philology, of historical learning, and the laurels of Germany would not let Boston sleep. As it had a great public library, and hoped to have a great art museum, might it not have a great university? Harvard in one sense was a university already, in that the college (although there was only one) was surrounded by a group of professional schools, notably those of law and medicine, in which studies requisite for the service of the community, and leading potentially to brilliant careers, were carried on with conspicuous success. The number of these professional schools might have been enlarged, as has been actually done later, until training in all the professions had been provided. But it happens that the descriptive sciences, languages, mathematics, and philosophy are not studies useful for any profession, except that of teaching these very subjects over again; and there was no practical way of introducing them into the Harvard system except to graft them upon the curriculum of the college; otherwise neither money nor students could

have been found for so much ornamental learning.

This circumstance, external and irrelevant as it may seem, I think had a great influence over the temper and quality of the Harvard philosophers; for it mingled responsibility for the education of youth, and much labour in it, with their pure speculation. Teaching is a delightful paternal art, and especially teaching intelligent and warm-hearted youngsters, as most American collegians are; but it is an art like acting, where the performance, often rehearsed, must be adapted to an audience hearing it only once. The speaker must make concessions to their impatience, their taste, their capacity, their prejudices, their ultimate good; he must neither bore nor perplex nor demoralise them. His thoughts must be such as can flow daily, and be set down in notes; they must come when the bell rings and stop appropriately when the bell rings a second time. The best that is in him, as Mephistopheles says in *Faust*, he dare not tell them; and as the substance of this possession is spiritual, to withhold is often to lose it. For it is not merely a matter of fearing not to be under-

stood, or giving offence; in the presence of a hundred youthful upturned faces a man cannot, without diffidence, speak in his own person, of his own thoughts; he needs support, in order to exert influence with a good conscience; unless he feels that he is the vehicle of a massive tradition, he will become bitter, or flippant, or aggressive; if he is to teach with good grace and modesty and authority, it must not be he that speaks, but science or humanity that is speaking in him.

Now the state of Harvard College, and of American education generally, at the time to which I refer, had this remarkable effect on the philosophers there: it made their sense of social responsibility acute, because they were consciously teaching and guiding the community, as if they had been clergymen; and it made no less acute their moral loneliness, isolation, and forced self-reliance, because they were like clergymen without a church, and not only had no common philosophic doctrine to transmit, but were expected not to have one. They were invited to be at once genuine philosophers and popular professors; and the degree to which

some of them managed to unite these contraries is remarkable, especially if we consider the character of the academic public they had to serve and to please. While the sentiments of most Americans in politics and morals, if a little vague, are very conservative, their democratic instincts, and the force of circumstances, have produced a system of education which anticipates all that the most extreme revolution could bring about; and while no one dreams of forcibly suppressing private property, religion, or the family, American education ignores these things, and proceeds as much as possible as if they did not exist. The child passes very young into a free school, established and managed by the municipal authorities; the teachers, even for the older boys, are chiefly unmarried women, sensitive, faithful, and feeble; their influence helps to establish that separation which is so characteristic of America between things intellectual, which remain wrapped in a feminine veil and, as it were, under glass, and the rough business and passions of life. The lessons are ambitious in range, but are made as easy, as interesting, and as optional as possible; the stress is divided between

what the child likes now and what he is going to need in his trade or profession. The young people are sympathetically encouraged to instruct themselves and to educate one another. They romp and make fun like young monkeys, they flirt and have their private " brain-storms " like little supermen and superwomen. They are tremendously in earnest about their college intrigues and intercollegiate athletic wars. They are fond, often compassionately fond, of their parents, and home is all the more sacred to them in that they are seldom there. They enjoy a surprising independence in habits, friendships, and opinions. Brothers and sisters often choose different religions. The street, the school, the young people's club, the magazine, the popular novel, furnish their mental pabulum. The force of example and of passing custom is all the more irresistible in this absence of authority and tradition; for this sort of independence rather diminishes the power of being original, by supplying a slenderer basis and a thinner soil from which originality might spring. Uniformity is established spontaneously without discipline, as in the popular speech and ethics of every

nation. Against this tendency to uniformity the efforts of a cultivated minority to maintain a certain distinction and infuse it into their lives and minds are not very successful. They have secondary schools for their boys in which the teachers are men, and even boarding-schools in the country, more or less Gothic in aspect and English in regimen; there are other semi-foreign institutions and circles, Catholic or Jewish, in which religion is the dominant consideration. There is also the society of the very rich, with cosmopolitan leanings and a vivacious interest in artistic undertakings and personalities. But all these distinctions, important as they may seem to those who cultivate them, are a mere shimmer and ripple on the surface of American life; and for an observer who sees things in perspective they almost disappear. By a merciful dispensation of nature, the pupils of these choice establishments, the moment they plunge into business or politics, acquire the protective colouring of their environment and become indistinguishable from the generic American. Their native disposition was after all the national one, their attempted special education was perfunctory, and the influence

of their public activities and surroundings is overwhelming. American life is a powerful solvent. As it stamps the immigrant, almost before he can speak English, with an unmistakable muscular tension, cheery self-confidence and habitual challenge in the voice and eyes, so it seems to neutralise every intellectual element, however tough and alien it may be, and to fuse it in the native good-will, complacency, thoughtlessness, and optimism.

Consider, for instance, the American Catholics, of whom there are nominally many millions, and who often seem to retain their ancestral faith sincerely and affectionately. This faith took shape during the decline of the Roman empire; it is full of large disillusions about this world and minute illusions about the other. It is ancient, metaphysical, poetic, elaborate, ascetic, autocratic, and intolerant. It confronts the boastful natural man, such as the American is, with a thousand denials and menaces. Everything in American life is at the antipodes to such a system. Yet the American Catholic is entirely at peace. His tone in everything, even in religion, is cheerfully American. It is wonderful how silently, amicably, and happily

he lives in a community whose spirit is profoundly hostile to that of his religion. He seems to take stock in his church as he might in a gold mine—sure it is a grand, dazzling, unique thing; and perhaps he masks, even to himself, his purely imaginative ardour about it, with the pretext that it is sure to make his fortune both in this life and in the next. His church, he will tell you, is a first-rate church to belong to; the priests are fine fellows, like the policemen; the Sisters are dear noble women, like his own sisters; his parish is flourishing, and always rebuilding its church and founding new schools, orphan asylums, sodalities, confraternities, perpetual adoration societies. No parish can raise so much money for any object, or if there are temporary troubles, the fact still remains that America has three Cardinals and that the Catholic religion is the biggest religion on earth. Attachment to his church in such a temper brings him into no serious conflict with his Protestant neighbours. They live and meet on common ground. Their respective religions pass among them for family matters, private and sacred, with no political implications.

Such was the education and such the atmosphere of intellectual innocence which prevailed in the public—mostly undergraduates—to which the Harvard philosophers adapted their teaching and to some extent their philosophy. The students were intelligent, ambitious, remarkably able to "do things"; they were keen about the matters that had already entered into their lives, and invincibly happy in their ignorance of everything else. A gentle contempt for the past permeated their judgements. They were not accustomed to the notion of authority, nor aware that it might have legitimate grounds; they instinctively disbelieved in the superiority of what was out of reach. About high questions of politics and religion their minds were open but vague; they seemed not to think them of practical importance; they acquiesced in people having any views they liked on such subjects; the fluent and fervid enthusiasms so common among European students, prophesying about politics, philosophy, and art, were entirely unknown among them. Instead they had absorbing local traditions of their own, athletic and social, and their college life was their true education, an

education in friendship, co-operation, and freedom. In the eighteen-eighties a good deal of old-fashioned shabbiness and jollity lingered about Harvard. Boston and Cambridge in those days resembled in some ways the London of Dickens: the same dismal wealth, the same speechifying, the same anxious respectability, the same sordid back streets, with their air of shiftlessness and decay, the same odd figures and loud humour, and, to add a touch of horror, the monstrous suspicion that some of the inhabitants might be secretly wicked. Life, for the undergraduates, was full of droll incidents and broad farce; it drifted good-naturedly from one commonplace thing to another. Standing packed in the tinkling horse-car, their coat-collars above their ears and their feet deep in the winter straw, they jogged in a long half-hour to Boston, there to enjoy the delights of female society, the theatre, or a good dinner. And in the summer days, for Class Day and Commencement, feminine and elderly Boston would return the visit, led by the governor of Massachusetts in his hired carriage-and-four, and by the local orators and poets, brimming with jokes and con-

ventional sentiments, and eager not so much to speed the youngsters on their career, as to air their own wit, and warm their hearts with punch and with collective memories of youth. It was an idyllic, haphazard, humoristic existence, without fine imagination, without any familiar infusion of scholarship, without articulate religion: a flutter of intelligence in a void, flying into trivial play, in order to drop back, as soon as college days were over, into the drudgery of affairs. There was the love of beauty, but without the sight of it; for the bits of pleasant landscape or the works of art which might break the ugliness of the foreground were a sort of æsthetic miscellany, enjoyed as one enjoys a museum; there was nothing in which the spirit of beauty was deeply interfused, charged with passion and discipline and intricate familiar associations with delicate and noble things. Of course, the sky is above every country, and New England had brilliant sunsets and deep snows, and sea and woods were at hand for the holidays; and it was notable how much even what a homely art or accident might have done for the towns was studied and admired. Old corners were pointed out

where the dingy red brick had lost its rigidity and taken on a mossy tinge, and where here and there a pane of glass, surviving all tenants and housemaids, had turned violet in the sunlight of a hundred years; and most precious of all were the high thin elms, spreading aloft, looped and drooping over old streets and commons. And yet it seemed somehow as if the sentiment lavished on these things had been intended by nature for something else, for something more important. Not only had the mind of the nation been originally somewhat chilled and impoverished by Protestantism, by migration to a new world, by absorption in material tasks, but what fine sensibility lingered in an older generation was not easily transmitted to the young. The young had their own ways, which on principle were to be fostered and respected; and one of their instincts was to associate only with those of their own age and calibre. The young were simply young, and the old simply old, as among peasants. Teachers and pupils seemed animals of different species, useful and well-disposed towards each other, like a cow and a milkmaid; periodic contributions could pass between

them, but not conversation. This circumstance shows how much American intelligence is absorbed in what is not intellectual. Their tasks and their pleasures divide people of different ages; what can unite them is ideas, impersonal interests, liberal arts. Without these they cannot forget their mutual inferiority.

Certainly those four college years, judged by any external standard, were trivial and wasted; but Americans, although so practical in their adult masculine undertakings, are slow to take umbrage at the elaborate playfulness of their wives and children. With the touching humility of strength, they seem to say to themselves, "Let the dear creatures have their fling, and be happy: what else are we old fellows slaving for?" And certainly the joy of life is the crown of it; but have American ladies and collegians achieved the joy of life? Is that the summit?

William James had a theory that if some scientific widower, with a child about to learn to walk, could be persuaded to allow the child's feet to be blistered, it would turn out, when the blisters were healed, that the child

would walk as well as if he had practised and had many a fall; because the machinery necessary for walking would have matured in him automatically, just as the machinery for breathing does in the womb. The case of the old-fashioned American college may serve to support this theory. It blistered young men's heads for four years and prevented them from practising anything useful; yet at the end they were found able to do most things as well, or twice as well, as their contemporaries who had been all that time apprenticed and chained to a desk. Manhood and sagacity ripen of themselves; it suffices not to repress or distort them. The college liberated the young man from the pursuit of money, from hypocrisy, from the control of women. He could grow for a time according to his nature, and if this growth was not guided by much superior wisdom or deep study, it was not warped by any serious perversion; and if the intellectual world did not permanently entice him, are we so sure that in philosophy, for instance, it had anything to offer that was very solid in itself, or humanly very important? At least he learned that such things existed, and gathered

a shrewd notion of what they could do for a man, and what they might make of him.

When Harvard was reformed—and I believe all the colleges are reformed now—the immediate object was not to refine college life or render it more scholarly, though for certain circles this was accomplished incidentally; the object was rather to extend the scope of instruction, and make it more advanced. It is natural that every great city, the capital of any nation or region, should wish to possess a university in the literal sense of the word—an encyclopædic institute, or group of institutes, to teach and foster all the professions, all the arts, and all the sciences. Such a university need have nothing to do with education, with the transmission of a particular moral and intellectual tradition. Education might be courteously presupposed. The teacher would not be a man with his hand on a lad's shoulder, his son or young brother; he would be an expert in some science, delivering lectures for public instruction, while perhaps privately carrying on investigations with the aid of a few disciples whom he would be training in his specialty. There

would be no reason why either the professors or the auditors in such an institution should live together or should have much in common in religion, morals, or breeding, or should even speak the same language. On the contrary, if only each was competent in his way, the more miscellaneous their types the more perfect would these render their *universitas*. The public addressed, also, need not be restricted, any more than the public at a church or a theatre or a town library, by any requirements as to age, sex, race, or attainments. They would come on their own responsibility, to pursue what studies they chose, and so long as they found them profitable. Nor need there be any limit as to the subjects broached, or any division of them into faculties or departments, except perhaps for convenience in administration. One of the functions of professors would be to invent new subjects, because this world is so complex, and the play of the human mind upon it is so external and iridescent, that, as men's interests and attitude vary, fresh unities and fresh aspects are always discernible in everything.

As Harvard University developed, all

these characteristics appeared in it in a more or less marked degree; but the transformation was never complete. The centre of it remained a college, with its local constituency and rooted traditions, and its thousand or two thousand undergraduates needing to be educated. Experts in every science and money to pay them were not at hand, and the foreign talent that could be attracted did not always prove morally or socially digestible. The browsing undergraduate could simply range with a looser tether, and he was reinforced by a fringe of graduates who had not yet had enough, or who were attracted from other colleges. These graduates came to form a sort of normal school for future professors, stamped as in Germany with a Ph.D.; and the teachers in each subject became a committee charged with something of the functions of a registry office, to find places for their nurslings. The university could thus acquire a national and even an international function, drawing in distinguished talent and youthful ambition from everywhere, and sending forth in various directions its apostles of light and learning.

I think it is intelligible that in such a place and at such a crisis philosophy should have played a conspicuous part, and also that it should have had an ambiguous character. There had to be, explicit or implicit, a philosophy for the college. A place where all polite Boston has been educated for centuries cannot bely its moral principles and religious questionings; it must transmit its austere, faithful, reforming spirit. But at the same time there had now to be a philosophy for the university. A chief part of that traditional faith was the faith in freedom, in inquiry; and it was necessary, in the very interests of the traditional philosophy, to take account of all that was being said in the world, and to incorporate the spirit of the times in the spirit of the fathers. Accordingly, no single abstract opinion was particularly tabooed at Harvard; granted industry, sobriety, and some semblance of theism, no professor was expected to agree with any other. I believe the authorities would have been well pleased, for the sake of completeness, to have added a Buddhist, a Moslem, and a Catholic scholastic to the philosophical faculty, if

only suitable sages could have been found, house-trained, as it were, and able to keep pace with the academic machine and to attract a sufficient number of pupils. But this official freedom was not true freedom, there was no happiness in it. A slight smell of brimstone lingered in the air. You might think what you liked, but you must consecrate your belief or your unbelief to the common task of encouraging everybody and helping everything on. You might almost be an atheist, if you were troubled enough about it. The atmosphere was not that of intelligence nor of science, it was that of duty.

In the academic life and methods of the university there was the same incomplete transformation. The teaching required was for the most part college teaching, in college subjects, such as might well have been entrusted to tutors; but it was given by professors in the form of lectures, excessive in number and too often repeated; and they were listened to by absent-minded youths, ill-grounded in the humanities, and not keenly alive to intellectual interests. The graduates (like the young ladies) were

more attentive and anxious not to miss anything, but they were no better prepared and often less intelligent; and there is no dunce like a mature dunce. Accordingly, the professor of philosophy had to swim against rather a powerful current. Sometimes he succumbed to the reality; and if, for instance, he happened to mention Darwin, and felt a blank before him, he would add in a parenthesis, "Darwin, Charles, author of the *Origin of Species*, 1859; epoch-making work." At other times he might lose himself altogether in the ideal and imagine that he was publishing immortal thoughts to the true university, to the world at large, and was feeling an exhilarating contact with masses of mankind, themselves quickened by his message. He might see in his mind's eye rows of learned men and women before him, familiar with every doubt, hardened to every conflict of opinion, ready for any revolution, whose minds nothing he could say could possibly shock, or disintegrate any further; on the contrary, the naked truth, which is gentle in its austerity, might come to them as a blessed deliverance, and he might fancy himself

for a moment a sort of hero from the realms of light descending into the nether regions and throwing a sop of reason into the jaws of snarling prejudice and frantic error. Or if the class was small, and only two or three were gathered together, he might imagine instead that he was sowing seeds of wisdom, warmed by affection, in the minds of genuine disciples, future tabernacles of the truth. It is possible that if the reality had corresponded more nearly with these dreams, and Harvard had actually been an adult university, philosophers there might have distilled their doctrines into a greater purity. As it was, Harvard philosophy had an opposite merit: it represented faithfully the complex inspiration of the place and hour. As the university was a local puritan college opening its windows to the scientific world, so at least the two most gifted of its philosophers were men of intense feeling, religious and romantic, but attentive to the facts of nature and the currents of worldly opinion; and each of them felt himself bound by two different responsibilities, that of describing things as they are, and that of finding them propitious to certain preconceived human

desires. And while they shared this double allegiance, they differed very much in temper, education, and taste. William James was what is called an empiricist, Josiah Royce an idealist; they were excellent friends and greatly influenced each other, and the very diversity between them rendered their conjunction typical of the state of philosophy in England and America, divided between the old British and the German schools. As if all this intellectual complication had not been enough, they were obliged to divide their energies externally, giving to their daily tasks as professors and pedagogues what duty demanded, and only the remainder to scholarship, reflection, and literary work. Even this distracting circumstance, however, had its compensations. College work was a human bond, a common practical interest; it helped to keep up that circulation of the blood which made the whole Harvard school of philosophy a vital unit, and co-operative in its freedom. There was a general momentum in it, half institutional, half moral, a single troubled, noble, exciting life. Every one was labouring with the contradiction he felt in things, and perhaps in himself;

all were determined to find some honest way out of it, or at least to bear it bravely. It was a fresh morning in the life of reason, cloudy but brightening.

CHAPTER III

WILLIAM JAMES

WILLIAM JAMES enjoyed in his youth what are called advantages: he lived among cultivated people, travelled, had teachers of various nationalities. His father was one of those somewhat obscure sages whom early America produced: mystics of independent mind, hermits in the desert of business, and heretics in the churches. They were intense individualists, full of veneration for the free souls of their children, and convinced that every one should paddle his own canoe, especially on the high seas. William James accordingly enjoyed a stimulating if slightly irregular education: he never acquired that reposeful mastery of particular authors and those safe ways of feeling and judging which are fostered in great schools and universities. In conse-

quence he showed an almost physical horror of club sentiment and of the stifling atmosphere of all officialdom. He had a knack for drawing, and rather the temperament of the artist; but the unlovely secrets of nature and the troubles of man preoccupied him, and he chose medicine for his profession. Instead of practising, however, he turned to teaching physiology, and from that passed gradually to psychology and philosophy.

In his earlier years he retained some traces of polyglot student days at Paris, Bonn, Vienna, or Geneva; he slipped sometimes into foreign phrases, uttered in their full vernacular; and there was an occasional afterglow of Bohemia about him, in the bright stripe of a shirt or the exuberance of a tie. On points of art or medicine he retained a professional touch and an unconscious ease which he hardly acquired in metaphysics. I suspect he had heartily admired some of his masters in those other subjects, but had never seen a philosopher whom he would have cared to resemble. Of course there was nothing of the artist in William James, as the artist is sometimes conceived in England, nothing of the æsthete,

nothing affected or limp. In person he was short rather than tall, erect, brisk, bearded, intensely masculine. While he shone in expression and would have wished his style to be noble if it could also be strong, he preferred in the end to be spontaneous, and to leave it at that; he tolerated slang in himself rather than primness. The rough, homely, picturesque phrase, whatever was graphic and racy, recommended itself to him; and his conversation outdid his writing in this respect. He believed in improvisation, even in thought; his lectures were not minutely prepared. Know your subject thoroughly, he used to say, and trust to luck for the rest. There was a deep sense of insecurity in him, a mixture of humility with romanticism: we were likely to be more or less wrong anyhow, but we might be wholly sincere. One moment should respect the insight of another, without trying to establish too regimental a uniformity. If you corrected yourself tartly, how could you know that the correction was not the worse mistake? All our opinions were born free and equal, all children of the Lord, and if they were not consistent that was the Lord's

business, not theirs. In reality, James was consistent enough, as even Emerson (more extreme in this sort of irresponsibility) was too. Inspiration has its limits, sometimes very narrow ones. But James was not consecutive, not insistent; he turned to a subject afresh, without egotism or pedantry; he dropped his old points, sometimes very good ones; and he modestly looked for light from others, who had less light than himself.

His excursions into philosophy were accordingly in the nature of raids, and it is easy for those who are attracted by one part of his work to ignore other parts, in themselves perhaps more valuable. I think that in fact his popularity does not rest on his best achievements. His popularity rests on three somewhat incidental books, *The Will to Believe*, *Pragmatism*, and *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, whereas, as it seems to me, his best achievement is his *Principles of Psychology*. In this book he surveys, in a way which for him is very systematic, a subject made to his hand. In its ostensible outlook it is a treatise like any other, but what distinguishes it is the author's gift for

evoking vividly the very life of the mind. This is a work of imagination; and the subject as he conceived it, which is the flux of immediate experience in men in general, requires imagination to read it at all. It is a literary subject, like autobiography or psychological fiction, and can be treated only poetically; and in this sense Shakespeare is a better psychologist than Locke or Kant. Yet this gift of imagination is not merely literary; it is not useless in divining the truths of science, and it is invaluable in throwing off prejudice and scientific shams. The fresh imagination and vitality of William James led him to break through many a false convention. He saw that experience, as we endure it, is not a mosaic of distinct sensations, nor the expression of separate hostile faculties, such as reason and the passions, or sense and the categories; it is rather a flow of mental discourse, like a dream, in which all divisions and units are vague and shifting, and the whole is continually merging together and drifting apart. It fades gradually in the rear, like the wake of a ship, and bites into the future, like the bow cutting the water.

For the candid psychologist, carried bodily on this voyage of discovery, the past is but a questionable report, and the future wholly indeterminate; everything is simply what it is experienced as being.

At the same time, psychology is supposed to be a science, a claim which would tend to confine it to the natural history of man, or the study of behaviour, as is actually proposed by Auguste Comte and by some of James's own disciples, more jejune if more clear-headed than he. As matters now stand, however, psychology as a whole is not a science, but a branch of philosophy; it brings together the literary description of mental discourse and the scientific description of material life, in order to consider the relation between them, which is the nexus of human nature.

What was James's position on this crucial question? It is impossible to reply unequivocally. He approached philosophy as mankind originally approached it, without having a philosophy, and he lent himself to various hypotheses in various directions. He professed to begin his study on the assumptions of common sense, that there is

a material world which the animals that live in it are able to perceive and to think about. He gave a congruous extension to this view in his theory that emotion is purely bodily sensation, and also in his habit of conceiving the mind as a total shifting sensibility. To pursue this path, however, would have led him to admit that nature was automatic and mind simply cognitive, conclusions from which every instinct in him recoiled. He preferred to believe that mind and matter had independent energies and could lend one another a hand, matter operating by motion and mind by intention. This dramatic, amphibious way of picturing causation is natural to common sense, and might be defended if it were clearly defined; but James was insensibly carried away from it by a subtle implication of his method. This implication was that experience or mental discourse not only constituted a set of substantive facts, but the *only* substantive facts; all else, even that material world which his psychology had postulated, could be nothing but a verbal or fantastic symbol for sensations in their experienced order. So that while nominally the door was kept

open to any hypothesis regarding the conditions of the psychological flux, in truth the question was prejudged. The hypotheses, which were parts of this psychological flux, could have no object save other parts of it. That flux itself, therefore, which he could picture so vividly, was the fundamental existence. The *sense* of bounding over the waves, the *sense* of being on an adventurous voyage, was the living fact; the rest was dead reckoning. Where one's gift is, there will one's faith be also; and to this poet appearance was the only reality.

This sentiment, which always lay at the back of his mind, reached something like formal expression in his latest writings, where he sketched what he called radical empiricism. The word experience is like a shrapnel shell, and bursts into a thousand meanings. Here we must no longer think of its setting, its discoveries, or its march; to treat it radically we must abstract its immediate objects and reduce it to pure data. It is obvious (and the sequel has already proved) that experience so understood would lose its romantic signification, as a personal adventure or a response to the shocks of fortune. "Experi-

ence" would turn into a cosmic dance of absolute entities created and destroyed *in vacuo* according to universal laws, or perhaps by chance. No minds would gather this experience, and no material agencies would impose it; but the immediate objects present to any one would simply be parts of the universal fireworks, continuous with the rest, and all the parts, even if not present to anybody, would have the same status. Experience would then not at all resemble what Shakespeare reports or what James himself had described in his psychology. If it could be experienced as it flows in its entirety (which is fortunately impracticable), it would be a perpetual mathematical nightmare. Every whirling atom, every changing relation, and every incidental perspective would be a part of it. I am far from wishing to deny for a moment the scientific value of such a cosmic system, if it can be worked out; physics and mathematics seem to me to plunge far deeper than literary psychology into the groundwork of this world; but human experience is the stuff of literary psychology; we cannot reach the stuff of physics and mathematics except by arresting or even hypostatising some elements of

appearance, and expanding them on an abstracted and hypothetical plane of their own. Experience, as memory and literature rehearse it, remains nearer to us than that: it is something dreamful, passionate, dramatic, and significative.

Certainly this personal human experience, expressible in literature and in talk, and no cosmic system however profound, was what James knew best and trusted most. Had he seen the developments of his radical empiricism, I cannot help thinking he would have marvelled that such logical mechanisms should have been hatched out of that egg. The principal problems and aspirations that haunted him all his life long would lose their meaning in that cosmic atmosphere. The pragmatic nature of truth, for instance, would never suggest itself in the presence of pure data; but a romantic mind soaked in agnosticism, conscious of its own habits and assuming an environment the exact structure of which can never be observed, may well convince itself that, for experience, truth is nothing but a happy use of signs—which is indeed the truth of literature. But if we once accept *any* system of the universe

as literally true, the value of convenient signs to prepare us for such experience as is yet absent cannot be called truth: it is plainly nothing but a necessary inaccuracy. So, too, with the question of the survival of the human individual after death. For radical empiricism a human individual is simply a certain cycle or complex of terms, like any other natural fact; that some echoes of his mind should recur after the regular chimes have ceased, would have nothing paradoxical about it. A mathematical world is a good deal like music, with its repetitions and transpositions, and a little trill, which you might call a person, might well peep up here and there all over a vast composition. Something of that sort may be the truth of spiritualism; but it is not what the spiritualists imagine. Their whole interest lies not in the experiences they have, but in the interpretation they give to them, assigning them to troubled spirits in another world; but both another world and a spirit are notions repugnant to a radical empiricism.

I think it is important to remember, if we are not to misunderstand William James, that his radical empiricism and pragmatism were

in his own mind only methods; his doctrine, if he may be said to have had one, was agnosticism. And just because he was an agnostic (feeling instinctively that beliefs and opinions, if they had any objective beyond themselves, could never be sure they had attained it), he seemed in one sense so favourable to credulity. He was not credulous himself, far from it; he was well aware that the trust he put in people or ideas might betray him. For that very reason he was respectful and pitiful to the trustfulness of others. Doubtless they were wrong, but who were we to say so? In his own person he was ready enough to face the mystery of things, and whatever the womb of time might bring forth; but until the curtain was rung down on the last act of the drama (and it might have no last act!) he wished the intellectual cripples and the moral hunchbacks not to be jeered at; perhaps they might turn out to be the heroes of the play. Who could tell what heavenly influences might not pierce to these sensitive half-flayed creatures, which are lost on the thick-skinned, the sane, and the duly goggled? We must not suppose, however, that James meant these contrite

and romantic suggestions dogmatically. The agnostic, as well as the physician and neurologist in him, was never quite eclipsed. The hope that some new revelation might come from the lowly and weak could never mean to him what it meant to the early Christians. For him it was only a right conceded to them to experiment with their special faiths; he did not expect such faiths to be discoveries of absolute fact, which everybody else might be constrained to recognise. If any one had made such a claim, and had seemed to have some chance of imposing it universally, James would have been the first to turn against him; not, of course, on the ground that it was *impossible* that such an orthodoxy should be true, but with a profound conviction that it was to be feared and distrusted. No: the degree of authority and honour to be accorded to various human faiths was a moral question, not a theoretical one. All faiths were what they were experienced as being, in their capacity of faiths; these faiths, not their objects, were the hard facts we must respect. We cannot pass, except under the illusion of the moment, to anything firmer or on a deeper level. There was

accordingly no sense of security, no joy, in James's apology for personal religion. He did not really believe; he merely believed in the right of believing that you might be right if you believed.

It is this underlying agnosticism that explains an incoherence which we might find in his popular works, where the story and the moral do not seem to hang together. Professedly they are works of psychological observation; but the tendency and suasion in them seems to run to disintegrating the idea of truth, recommending belief without reason, and encouraging superstition. A psychologist who was not an agnostic would have indicated, as far as possible, whether the beliefs and experiences he was describing were instances of delusion or of rare and fine perception, or in what measure they were a mixture of both. But James—and this is what gives such romantic warmth to these writings of his—disclaims all antecedent or superior knowledge, listens to the testimony of each witness in turn, and only by accident allows us to feel that he is swayed by the eloquence and vehemence of some of them rather than of others. This method is modest,

generous, and impartial; but if James intended, as I think he did, to picture the *drama* of human belief, with its risks and triumphs, the method was inadequate. Dramatists never hesitate to assume, and to let the audience perceive, who is good and who bad, who wise and who foolish, in their pieces; otherwise their work would be as impotent dramatically as scientifically. The tragedy and comedy of life lie precisely in the contrast between the illusions or passions of the characters and their true condition and fate, hidden from them at first, but evident to the author and the public. If in our diffidence and scrupulous fairness we refuse to take this judicial attitude, we shall be led to strange conclusions. The navigator, for instance, trusting his "experience" (which here, as in the case of religious people, means his imagination and his art), insists on believing that the earth is spherical; he has sailed round it. That is to say, he has seemed to himself to steer westward and westward, and has seemed to get home again. But how should he know that home is now where it was before, or that his past and present impressions of it come from the same, or

from any, material object? How should he know that space is as trim and tri-dimensional as the discredited Euclidians used to say it was? If, on the contrary, my worthy aunt, trusting to her longer and less ambiguous experience of her garden, insists that the earth is flat, and observes that the theory that it is round, which is only a theory, is much less often tested and found useful than her own perception of its flatness, and that moreover that theory is pedantic, intellectualistic, and a product of academies, and a rash dogma to impose on mankind for ever and ever, it might seem that on James's principle we ought to agree with her. But no; on James's real principles we need not agree with her, nor with the navigator either. Radical empiricism, which is radical agnosticism, delivers us from so benighted a choice. For the quarrel becomes unmeaning when we remember that the earth is *both* flat and round, if it is experienced as being both. The substantive fact is not a single object on which both the perception and the theory are expected to converge; the substantive facts are the theory and the perception themselves. And we may note in passing that

empiricism, when it ceases to value experience as a means of discovering external things, can give up its ancient prejudice in favour of sense as against imagination, for imagination and thought are immediate experiences as much as sensation is: they are therefore, for absolute empiricism, no less actual ingredients of reality.

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience* we find the same apologetic intention running through a vivid account of what seems for the most part (as James acknowledged) religious disease. Normal religious experience is hardly described in it. Religious experience, for the great mass of mankind, consists in simple faith in the truth and benefit of their religious traditions. But to James something so conventional and rationalistic seemed hardly experience and hardly religious; he was thinking only of irruptive visions and feelings as interpreted by the mystics who had them. These interpretations he ostensibly presents, with more or less wistful sympathy for what they were worth; but emotionally he wished to champion them. The religions that had sprung up in America spontaneously — communistic, hysterical,

spiritistic, or medicinal—were despised by select and superior people. You might inquire into them, as you might go slumming, but they remained suspect and distasteful. This picking up of genteel skirts on the part of his acquaintance prompted William James to roll up his sleeves—not for a knock-out blow, but for a thorough clinical demonstration. He would tenderly vivisect the experiences in question, to show how living they were, though of course he could not guarantee, more than other surgeons do, that the patient would survive the operation. An operation that eventually kills may be technically successful, and the man may die cured; and so a description of religion that showed it to be madness might first show how real and how warm it was, so that if it perished, at least it would perish understood.

I never observed in William James any personal anxiety or enthusiasm for any of these dubious tenets. His conception even of such a thing as free-will, which he always ardently defended, remained vague; he avoided defining even what he conceived to be desirable in such matters. But he wished

to protect the weak against the strong, and what he hated beyond everything was the *non possumus* of any constituted authority. Philosophy for him had a Polish constitution; so long as a single vote was cast against the majority, nothing could pass. The suspense of judgement which he had imposed on himself as a duty, became almost a necessity. I think it would have depressed him if he had had to confess that any important question was finally settled. He would still have hoped that something might turn up on the other side, and that just as the scientific hangman was about to despatch the poor convicted prisoner, an unexpected witness would ride up in hot haste, and prove him innocent. Experience seems to most of us to lead to conclusions, but empiricism has sworn never to draw them.

In the discourse on "The Energies of Men," certain physiological marvels are recorded, as if to suggest that the resources of our minds and bodies are infinite, or can be infinitely enlarged by divine grace. Yet James would not, I am sure, have accepted that inference. He would, under pressure, have drawn in his mystical horns under his

scientific shell; but he was not naturalist enough to feel instinctively that the wonderful and the natural are all of a piece, and that only our degree of habituation distinguishes them. A nucleus, which we may poetically call the soul, certainly lies within us, by which our bodies and minds are generated and controlled, like an army by a government. In this nucleus, since nature in a small compass has room for anything, vast quantities of energy may well be stored up, which may be tapped on occasion, or which may serve like an electric spark to let loose energy previously existing in the grosser parts. But the absolute autocracy of this central power, or its success in imposing extraordinary trials on its subjects, is not an obvious good. Perhaps, like a democratic government, the soul is at its best when it merely collects and coordinates the impulses coming from the senses. The inner man is at times a tyrant, parasitical, wasteful, and voluptuous. At other times he is fanatical and mad. When he asks for and obtains violent exertions from the body, the question often is, as with the exploits of conquerors and conjurers, whether the impulse to do such prodigious things was

not gratuitous, and the things nugatory. Who would wish to be a mystic? James himself, who by nature was a spirited rather than a spiritual man, had no liking for sanctimonious transcendentalists, visionaries, or ascetics; he hated minds that run thin. But he hastened to correct this manly impulse, lest it should be unjust, and forced himself to overcome his repugnance. This was made easier when the unearthly phenomenon had a healing or saving function in the everyday material world; miracle then re-established its ancient identity with medicine, and both of them were humanised. Even when this union was not attained, James was reconciled to the miracle-workers partly by his great charity, and partly by his hunter's instinct to follow a scent, for he believed discoveries to be imminent. Besides, a philosopher who is a teacher of youth is more concerned to give people a right start than a right conclusion. James fell in with the hortatory tradition of college sages; he turned his psychology, whenever he could do so honestly, to purposes of edification; and his little sermons on habit, on will, on faith, and this on the latent capacities of men, were fine and stirring, and

just the sermons to preach to the young Christian soldier. He was much less sceptical in morals than in science. He seems to have felt sure that certain thoughts and hopes—those familiar to a liberal Protestantism—were every man's true friends in life. This assumption would have been hard to defend if he or those he habitually addressed had ever questioned it; yet his whole argument for voluntarily cultivating these beliefs rests on this assumption, that they are beneficent. Since, whether we will or no, we cannot escape the risk of error, and must succumb to some human or pathological bias, at least we might do so gracefully and in the form that would profit us most, by clinging to those prejudices which help us to lead what we all feel is a good life. But what is a good life? Had William James, had the people about him, had modern philosophers anywhere, any notion of that? I cannot think so. They had much experience of personal goodness, and love of it; they had standards of character and right conduct; but as to what might render human existence good, excellent, beautiful, happy, and worth having as a whole, their notions were utterly thin and

barbarous. They had forgotten the Greeks, or never known them.

This argument accordingly suffers from the same weakness as the similar argument of Pascal in favour of Catholic orthodoxy. You should force yourself to believe in it, he said, because if you do so and are right you win heaven, while if you are wrong you lose nothing. What would Protestants, Mohammedans, and Hindus say to that? Those alternatives of Pascal's are not the sole nor the true alternatives; such a wager —betting on the improbable because you are offered big odds—is an unworthy parody of the real choice between wisdom and folly. There is no heaven to be won in such a spirit, and if there was, a philosopher would despise it. So William James would have us bet on immortality, or bet on our power to succeed, because if we win the wager we can live to congratulate ourselves on our true instinct, while we lose nothing if we have made a mistake; for unless you have the satisfaction of finding that you have been right, the dignity of having been right is apparently nothing. Or if the argument is rather that these beliefs, whether true or

false, make life better in this world, the thing is simply false. To be boosted by an illusion is not to live better than to live in harmony with the truth; it is not nearly so safe, not nearly so sweet, and not nearly so fruitful. These refusals to part with a decayed illusion are really an infection to the mind. Believe, certainly; we cannot help believing; but believe rationally, holding what seems certain for certain, what seems probable for probable, what seems desirable for desirable, and what seems false for false.

In this matter, as usual, James had a true psychological fact and a generous instinct behind his confused moral suggestions. It is a psychological fact that men are influenced in their beliefs by their will and desires; indeed, I think we can go further and say that in its essence belief is an expression of impulse, of readiness to act. It is only peripherally, as our action is gradually adjusted to things, and our impulses to our possible or necessary action, that our ideas begin to hug the facts, and to acquire a true, if still a symbolic, significance. We do not need a will to believe; we only need a will to study the object in which we are

inevitably believing. But James was thinking less of belief in what we find than of belief in what we hope for: a belief which is not at all clear and not at all necessary in the life of mortals. Like most Americans, however, only more lyrically, James felt the call of the future and the assurance that it could be made far better, totally other, than the past. The pictures that religion had painted of heaven or the millennium were not what he prized, although his Swedenborgian connection might have made him tender to them, as perhaps it did to familiar spirits. It was the moral succour offered by religion, its open spaces, the possibility of miracles *in extremis*, that must be retained. If we recoiled at the thought of being dupes (which is perhaps what nature intended us to be), were we less likely to be dupes in disbelieving these sustaining truths than in believing them? Faith was needed to bring about the reform of faith itself, as well as all other reforms.

In some cases faith in success could nerve us to bring success about, and so justify itself by its own operation. This is a thought typical of James at his worst—a worst in

which there is always a good side. Here again psychological observation is used with the best intentions to hearten oneself and other people; but the fact observed is not at all understood, and a moral twist is given to it which (besides being morally questionable) almost amounts to falsifying the fact itself. Why does belief that you can jump a ditch help you to jump it? Because it is a symptom of the fact that you *could* jump it, that your legs were fit and that the ditch was two yards wide and not twenty. A rapid and just appreciation of these facts has given you your confidence, or at least has made it reasonable, manly, and prophetic; otherwise you would have been a fool and got a ducking for it. Assurance is contemptible and fatal unless it is self-knowledge. If you had been rattled you might have failed, because that would have been a symptom of the fact that you were out of gear; you would have been afraid because you trembled, as James at his best proclaimed. You would never have quailed if your system had been reacting smoothly to its opportunities, any more than you would totter and see double if you were not intoxi-

cated. Fear is a sensation of actual nervousness and disarray, and confidence a sensation of actual readiness; they are not disembodied feelings, existing for no reason, the devil Funk and the angel Courage, one or the other of whom may come down arbitrarily into your body, and revolutionise it. That is childish mythology, which survives innocently enough as a figure of speech, until a philosopher is found to take that figure of speech seriously. Nor is the moral suggestion here less unsound. What is good is not the presumption of power, but the possession of it: a clear head, aware of its resources, not a fuddled optimism, calling up spirits from the vasty deep. Courage is not a virtue, said Socrates, unless it is also wisdom. Could anything be truer both of courage in doing and of courage in believing? But it takes tenacity, it takes *reasonable* courage, to stick to scientific insights such as this of Socrates or that of James about the emotions; it is easier to lapse into the traditional manner, to search natural philosophy for miracles and moral lessons, and in morals proper, in the reasoned expression of preference, to splash about without a philosophy.

William James shared the passions of liberalism. He belonged to the left, which, as they say in Spain, is the side of the heart, as the right is that of the liver; at any rate there was much blood and no gall in his philosophy. He was one of those elder Americans still disquieted by the ghost of tyranny, social and ecclesiastical. Even the beauties of the past troubled him; he had a puritan feeling that they were tainted. They had been cruel and frivolous, and must have suppressed far better things. But what, we may ask, might these better things be? It may do for a revolutionary politician to say: "I may not know what I want—except office—but I know what I don't want"; it will never do for a philosopher. Aversions and fears imply principles of preference, goods acknowledged; and it is the philosopher's business to make these goods explicit. Liberty is not an art, liberty must be used to bring some natural art to fruition. Shall it be simply eating and drinking and wondering what will happen next? If there is some deep and settled need in the heart of man, to give direction to his efforts, what else should a philosopher

do but discover and announce what that need is?

There is a sense in which James was not a philosopher at all. He once said to me: "What a curse philosophy would be if we couldn't forget all about it!" In other words, philosophy was not to him what it has been to so many, a consolation and sanctuary in a life which would have been unsatisfying without it. It would be incongruous, therefore, to expect of him that he should build a philosophy like an edifice to go and live in for good. Philosophy to him was rather like a maze in which he happened to find himself wandering, and what he was looking for was the way out. In the presence of theories of any sort he was attentive, puzzled, suspicious, with a certain inner prompting to disregard them. He lived all his life among them, as a child lives among grown-up people; what a relief to turn from those stolid giants, with their prohibitions and exactions and tiresome talk, to another real child or a nice animal! Of course grown-up people are useful, and so James considered that theories might be; but in themselves, to live with, they were

rather in the way, and at bottom our natural enemies. It was well to challenge one or another of them when you got a chance; perhaps that challenge might break some spell, transform the strange landscape, and simplify life. A theory while you were creating or using it was like a story you were telling yourself or a game you were playing; it was a warm, self-justifying thing then; but when the glow of creation or expectation was over, a theory was a phantom, like a ghost, or like the minds of other people. To all other people, even to ghosts, William James was the soul of courtesy; and he was civil to most theories as well, as to more or less interesting strangers that invaded him. Nobody ever recognised more heartily the chance that others had of being right, and the right they had to be different. Yet when it came to understanding what they meant, whether they were theories or persons, his intuition outran his patience; he made some brilliant impressionistic sketch in his fancy and called it by their name. This sketch was as often flattered as distorted, and he was at times the dupe of his desire to be appreciative and

give the devil his due; he was too impulsive for exact sympathy; too subjective, too romantic, to be just. Love is very penetrating, but it penetrates to possibilities rather than to facts. The logic of opinions, as well as the exact opinions themselves, were not things James saw easily, or traced with pleasure. He liked to take things one by one, rather than to put two and two together. He was a mystic, a mystic in love with life. He was comparable to Rousseau and to Walt Whitman; he expressed a generous and tender sensibility, rebelling against sophistication, and preferring daily sights and sounds, and a vague but indomitable faith in fortune, to any settled intellectual tradition calling itself science or philosophy.

A prophet is not without honour save in his own country; and until the return wave of James's reputation reached America from Europe, his pupils and friends were hardly aware that he was such a distinguished man. Everybody liked him, and delighted in him for his generous, gullible nature and brilliant sallies. He was a sort of Irishman among the Brahmins, and seemed hardly imposing enough for a great man. They laughed at

his erratic views and his undisguised limitations. Of course a conscientious professor ought to know everything he professes to know, but then, they thought, a dignified professor ought to seem to know everything. The precise theologians and panoplied idealists, who exist even in America, shook their heads. What sound philosophy, said they to themselves, could be expected from an irresponsible doctor, who was not even a college graduate, a crude empiricist, and vivisector of frogs? On the other hand, the solid men of business were not entirely reassured concerning a teacher of youth who seemed to have no system in particular—the ignorant rather demand that the learned should have a system in store, to be applied at a pinch; and they could not quite swallow a private gentleman who dabbled in hypnotism, frequented mediums, didn't talk like a book, and didn't write like a book, except like one of his own. Even his pupils, attached as they invariably were to his person, felt some doubts about the profundity of one who was so very natural, and who after some interruption during a lecture—and he said life was a series of interruptions—would slap

his forehead and ask the man in the front row "What *was* I talking about?" Perhaps in the first years of his teaching he felt a little in the professor's chair as a military man might feel when obliged to read the prayers at a funeral. He probably conceived what he said more deeply than a more scholastic mind might have conceived it; yet he would have been more comfortable if some one else had said it for him. He liked to open the window, and look out for a moment. I think he was glad when the bell rang, and he could be himself again until the next day. But in the midst of this routine of the class-room the spirit would sometimes come upon him, and, leaning his head on his hand, he would let fall golden words, picturesque, fresh from the heart, full of the knowledge of good and evil. Incidentally there would crop up some humorous characterisation, some candid confession of doubt or of instinctive preference, some pungent scrap of learning; radicalisms plunging sometimes into the sub-soil of all human philosophies; and, on occasion, thoughts of simple wisdom and wistful piety, the most unfeigned and manly that anybody ever had.

CHAPTER IV

JOSIAH ROYCE

MEANTIME the mantle of philosophical authority had fallen at Harvard upon other shoulders. A young Californian, Josiah Royce, had come back from Germany with a reputation for wisdom; and even without knowing that he had already produced a new proof of the existence of God, merely to look at him you would have felt that he was a philosopher; his great head seemed too heavy for his small body, and his portentous brow, crowned with thick red hair, seemed to crush the lower part of his face. "Royce," said William James of him, "has an indecent exposure of forehead." There was a suggestion about him of the benevolent ogre or the old child, in whom a preternatural sharpness of insight lurked beneath a grotesque mask. If you gave him any cue, or

even without one, he could discourse broadly on any subject; you never caught him napping. Whatever the text-books and encyclopædias could tell him, he knew; and if the impression he left on your mind was vague, that was partly because, in spite of his comprehensiveness, he seemed to view everything in relation to something else that remained untold. His approach to anything was oblique; he began a long way off, perhaps with the American preface of a funny story; and when the point came in sight, it was at once enveloped again in a cloud of qualifications, in the parliamentary jargon of philosophy. The tap once turned on, out flowed the stream of systematic disquisition, one hour, two hours, three hours of it, according to demand or opportunity. The voice, too, was merciless and harsh. You felt the overworked, standardised, academic engine, creaking and thumping on at the call of duty or of habit, with no thought of sparing itself or any one else. Yet a sprightlier soul behind this performing soul seemed to watch and laugh at the process. Sometimes a merry light would twinkle in the little eyes, and a bashful smile would creep over the

uncompromising mouth. A sense of the paradox, the irony, the inconclusiveness of the whole argument would pierce to the surface, like a white-cap bursting here and there on the heavy swell of the sea.

His procedure was first to gather and digest whatever the sciences or the devil might have to say. He had an evident sly pleasure in the degustation and savour of difficulties; biblical criticism, the struggle for life, the latest German theory of sexual insanity, had no terrors for him; it was all grist for the mill, and woe to any tender thing, any beauty or any illusion, that should get between that upper and that nether millstone! He seemed to say: If I were not Alexander how gladly would I be Diogenes, and if I had not a system to defend, how easily I might tell you the truth. But after the sceptic had ambled quizzically over the ground, the prophet would mount the pulpit to survey it. He would then prove that in spite of all those horrors and contradictions, or rather because of them, the universe was absolutely perfect. For behind that mocking soul in him there was yet another, a devout and

heroic soul. Royce was heir to the Calvinistic tradition; piety, to his mind, consisted in trusting divine providence and justice, while emphasising the most terrifying truths about one's own depravity and the sinister holiness of God. He accordingly addressed himself, in his chief writings, to showing that all lives were parts of a single divine life in which all problems were solved and all evils justified.

It is characteristic of Royce that in his proof of something sublime, like the existence of God, his premiss should be something sad and troublesome, the existence of error. Error exists, he tells us, and common sense will readily agree, although the fact is not unquestionable, and pure mystics and pure sensualists deny it. But if error exists, Royce continues, there must be a truth from which it differs; and the existence of truth (according to the principle of idealism, that nothing can exist except for a mind that knows it) implies that some one knows the truth; but as to know the truth thoroughly, and supply the corrective to every possible error, involves omniscience, we have proved the existence of an omniscient

mind or universal thought; and this is almost, if not quite, equivalent to the existence of God.

What carried Royce over the evident chasms and assumptions in this argument was his earnestness and passionate eloquence. He passed for an eminent logician, because he was dialectical and fearless in argument and delighted in the play of formal relations; he was devoted to chess, music, and mathematics; but all this show of logic was but a screen for his heart, and in his heart there was no clearness. His reasoning was not pure logic or pure observation; it was always secretly enthusiastic or malicious, and the result it arrived at had been presupposed. Here, for instance, no unprejudiced thinker, not to speak of a pure logician, would have dreamt of using the existence of error to found the being of truth upon. Error is a biological accident which may any day cease to exist, say at the extinction of the human race; whereas the being of truth or fact is involved indefeasibly and eternally in the existence of anything whatever, past, present, or future; every event of itself renders true or false any proposition that refers to it. No

one would conceive of such a thing as error or suspect its presence, unless he had already found or assumed many a truth; nor could anything be an error actually unless the truth was definite and real. All this Royce of course recognised, and it was in some sense the heart of what he meant to assert and to prove; but it does not need proving and hardly asserting. What needed proof was something else, of less logical importance but far greater romantic interest, namely, that the truth was hovering over us and about to descend into our hearts; and this Royce was not disinclined to confuse with the being of truth, so as to bring it within the range of logical argument. He was tormented by the suspicion that he might be himself in the toils of error, and fervently aspired to escape from it. Error to him was no natural, and in itself harmless, incident of finitude; it was a sort of sin, as finitude was too. It was a part of the problem of evil; a terrible and urgent problem when your first postulate or dogma is that moral distinctions and moral experience are the substance of the world, and not merely an incident in it. The mere being of truth, which is all a logician needs,

would not help him in this wrestling for personal salvation; as he keenly felt and often said, the truth is like the stars, always laughing at us. Nothing would help him but *possession* of the truth, something eventual and terribly problematic. He longed to believe that all his troubles and questions, some day and somewhere, must find their solution and quietus; if not in his own mind, in some kindred spirit that he could, to that extent, identify with himself. There must be not only cold truth, not even cold truth personified, but victorious *knowledge* of the truth, breaking like a sun-burst through the clouds of error. The nerve of his argument was not logical at all; it was a confession of religious experience, in which the agonised consciousness of error led to a strong imaginative conviction that the truth would be found at last.

The truth, as here conceived, meant the whole truth about everything; and certainly, if any plausible evidence for such a conclusion could be adduced, it would be interesting to learn that we are destined to become omniscient, or are secretly omniscient already. Nevertheless, the aspiration of all religious

minds does not run that way. Aristotle tells us that there are many things it is better not to know; and his sublime deity is happily ignorant of our errors and of our very existence; more emphatically so the even sublimer deities of Plotinus and the Indians. The omniscience which our religion attributes to God as the searcher of hearts and the judge of conduct has a moral function rather than a logical one; it prevents us from hiding our sins or being unrecognised in our merits; it is not conceived to be requisite in order that it may be true that those sins or merits have existed. Atheists admit the facts, but they are content or perhaps relieved that they should pass unobserved. But here again Royce slipped into a romantic equivocation which a strict logician would not have tolerated. Knowledge of the truth, a passing psychological possession, was substituted for the truth known, and this at the cost of rather serious ultimate confusions. It is the truth itself, the facts in their actual relations, that honest opinion appeals to, not to another opinion or instance of knowledge; and if, in your dream of warm sympathy and public corroboration, you lay up your treasure in

some instance of knowledge, which time and doubt might corrupt, you have not laid up your treasure in heaven. In striving to prove the being of truth, the young Royce absurdly treated it as doubtful, setting a bad example to the pragmatists; while in striving to lend a psychological quality to this truth and turning it into a problematical instance of knowledge, he unwittingly deprived it of all authority and sublimity. To personify the truth is to care less for truth than for the corroboration and sympathy which the truth, become human, might bring to our opinions. It is to set up another thinker, ourself enlarged, to vindicate us; without considering that this second thinker would be shut up, like us, in his own opinions, and would need to look to the truth beyond him as much as we do.

To the old problem of evil Royce could only give an old answer, although he rediscovered and repeated it for himself in many ways, since it was the core of his whole system. Good, he said, is essentially the struggle with evil and the victory over it; so that if evil did not exist, good would be impossible. I do not think this answer set

him at rest; he could hardly help feeling that all goods are not of that bellicose description, and that not all evils produce a healthy reaction or are swallowed up in victory; yet the fact that the most specious solution to this problem of evil left it unsolved was in its way appropriate; for if the problem had been really solved, the struggle to find a solution and the faith that there was one would come to an end; yet perhaps this faith and this struggle are themselves the supreme good. Accordingly the true solution of this problem, which we may all accept, is that no solution can ever be found.

Here is an example of the difference between the being of truth and the ultimate solution of all our problems. There is certainly a truth about evil, and in this case not an unknown truth; yet it is no solution to the "problem" which laid the indomitable Royce on the rack. If a younger son asks why he was not born before his elder brother, that question may represent an intelligible state of his feelings; but there is no answer to it, because it is a childish question. So the question why it is right that there should be any evil is itself perverse and raised by

false presumptions. To an unsophisticated mortal the existence of evil presents a task, never a problem. Evil, like error, is an incident of animal life, inevitable in a crowded and unsettled world, where one spontaneous movement is likely to thwart another, and all to run up against material impossibilities. While life lasts this task is recurrent, and every creature, in proportion to the vitality and integrity of his nature, strives to remove or abate those evils of which he is sensible. When the case is urgent and he is helpless, he will cry out for divine aid; and (if he does not perish first) he will soon see this aid coming to him through some shift in the circumstances that renders his situation endurable. Positive religion takes a naturalistic view of things, and requires it. It parts company with a scientific naturalism only in accepting the authority of instinct or revelation in deciding certain questions of fact, such as immortality or miracles. It rouses itself to crush evil, without asking why evil exists. What could be more intelligible than that a deity like Jehovah, a giant inhabitant of the natural world, should be confronted with rivals, enemies, and rebellious children?

What could be more intelligible than that the inertia of matter, or pure chance, or some contrary purpose, should mar the expression of any platonic idea exercising its magic influence over the world? For the Greek as for the Jew the task of morals is the same: to subdue nature as far as possible to the uses of the soul, by whatever agencies material or spiritual may be at hand; and when a limit is reached in that direction, to harden and cauterise the heart in the face of inevitable evils, opening it wide at the same time to every sweet influence that may descend to it from heaven. Never for a moment was positive religion entangled in a sophistical optimism. Never did it conceive that the most complete final deliverance and triumph would *justify* the evils which they abolished. As William James put it, in his picturesque manner, if at the last day all creation was shouting hallelujah and there remained one cockroach with an unrequited love, *that* would spoil the universal harmony; it would spoil it, he meant, in truth and for the tender philosopher, but probably not for those excited saints. James was thinking chiefly of the present and future, but the same

scrupulous charity has its application to the past. To remove an evil is not to remove the fact that it has existed. The tears that have been shed were shed in bitterness, even if a remorseful hand afterwards wipes them away. To be patted on the back and given a sugar-plum does not reconcile even a child to a past injustice. And the case is much worse if we are expected to make our heaven out of the foolish and cruel pleasures of contrast, or out of the pathetic offuscation produced by a great relief. Such a heaven would be a lie, like the sardonic heavens of Calvin and Hegel. The existence of any evil anywhere at any time absolutely ruins a total optimism.

Nevertheless philosophers have always had a royal road to complete satisfaction. One of the purest of pleasures, which they cultivate above all others, is the pleasure of understanding. Now, as playwrights and novelists know, the intellect is no less readily or agreeably employed in understanding evil than in understanding good — more so, in fact, if in the intellectual man, besides his intelligence, there is a strain of coarseness, irony, or desire to belittle the good things

others possess and he himself has missed. Sometimes the philosopher, even when above all meanness, becomes so devoted a naturalist that he is ashamed to remain a moralist, although this is what he probably was in the beginning; and where all is one vast cataract of events, he feels it would be impertinent of him to divide them censoriously into things that ought to be and things that ought not to be. He may even go one step farther. Awestruck and humbled before the universe, he may insensibly transform his understanding and admiration of it into the assertion that the existence of evil is no evil at all, but that the order of the universe is in every detail necessary and perfect, so that the mere mention of the word evil is blind and blasphemous.

This sentiment, which as much as any other deserves the name of pantheism, is often expressed incoherently and with a false afflatus; but when rationally conceived, as it was by Spinoza, it amounts to this: that good and evil are relations which things bear to the living beings they affect. In itself nothing—much less this whole mixed universe—can be either good or bad; but the universe

wears the aspect of a good in so far as it feeds, delights, or otherwise fosters any creature within it. If we define the intellect as the power to see things as they are, it is clear that in so far as the philosopher is a pure intellect the universe will be a pure good to the philosopher; everything in it will give play to his exclusive passion. Wisdom counsels us therefore to become philosophers and to concentrate our lives as much as possible in pure intelligence, that we may be led by it into the ways of peace. Not that the universe will be proved thereby to be intrinsically good (although in the heat of their intellectual egotism philosophers are sometimes betrayed into saying so), but that it will have become in that measure a good to us, and we shall be better able to live happily and freely in it. If intelligibility appears in things, it does so like beauty or use, because the mind of man, in so far as it is adapted to them, finds its just exercise in their society.

This is an ancient, shrewd, and inexpugnable position. If Royce had been able to adhere to it consistently, he would have avoided his gratuitous problem of evil with-

out, I think, doing violence to the sanest element in his natural piety, which was joy in the hard truth, with a touch of humour and scorn in respect to mortal illusions. There was an observant and docile side to him; and as a child likes to see things work, he liked to see processions of facts marching on ironically, whatever we might say about it. This was his sense of the power of God. It attached him at first to Spinoza and later to mathematical logic. No small part of his life-long allegiance to the Absolute responded to this sentiment.

The outlook, however, was complicated and half reversed for him by the transcendental theory of knowledge which he had adopted. This theory regards all objects, including the universe, as merely terms posited by the will of the thinker, according to a definite grammar of thought native to his mind. In order that his thoughts may be addressed to any particular object, he must first choose and create it of his own accord; otherwise his opinions, not being directed upon any object in particular within his ken, cannot be either true or false, whatever picture they may frame. What any-

thing external may happen to be, when we do not mean to speak of it, is irrelevant to our discourse. If, for instance, the real Royce were not a denizen and product of my mind — of my deeper self — I could not so much as have a wrong idea of him. The need of this initial relevance in our judgements seems to the transcendentalist to drive all possible objects into the fold of his secret thoughts, so that he has two minds, one that seeks the facts and another that already possesses or rather constitutes them.

Pantheism, when this new philosophy of knowledge is adopted, seems at first to lose its foundations. There is no longer an external universe to which to bow; no little corner left for us in the infinite where, after making the great sacrifice, we may build a safe nest. The intellect to which we had proudly reduced ourselves has lost its pre-eminence; it can no longer be called the faculty of seeing things as they are. It has become what psychological critics of intellectualism, such as William James, understand by it: a mass of human propensities to abstraction, construction, belief, or inference, by which imaginary things and truths

are posited in the service of life. It is therefore on the same plane exactly as passion, music, or æsthetic taste: a mental complication which may be an index to other psychological facts connected with it genetically, but which has no valid intent, no ideal transcendence, no assertive or cognitive function. Intelligence so conceived understands nothing: it is a buzzing labour in the fancy which, by some obscure causation, helps us to live on.

To discredit the intellect, to throw off the incubus of an external reality or truth, was one of the boons which transcendentalism in its beginnings brought to the romantic soul. But although at first the sense of relief (to Fichte, for instance) was most exhilarating, the freedom achieved soon proved illusory: the terrible Absolute had been simply transplanted into the self. You were your own master, and omnipotent; but you were no less dark, hostile, and inexorable to yourself than the gods of Calvin or of Spinoza had been before. Since every detail of this mock world was your secret work, you were not only wiser but also more criminal than you knew. You were stifled, even more than

formerly, in the arms of nature, in the toils of your own unaccountable character, which made your destiny. Royce never recoiled from paradox or from bitter fact; and he used to say that a mouse, when tormented and torn to pieces by a cat, was realising his own deepest will, since he had sub-consciously chosen to be a mouse in a world that should have cats in it. The mouse really, in his deeper self, wanted to be terrified, clawed, and devoured. Royce was superficially a rationalist, with no tenderness for superstition in detail and not much sympathy with civilised religions; but we see here that in his heart he was loyal to the aboriginal principle of all superstition: reverence for what hurts. He said to himself that in so far as God was the devil—as daily experience and Hegelian logic proved was largely the case—devil-worship was true religion.

A protest, however, arose in his own mind against this doctrine. Strong early bonds attached him to moralism—to the opinion of the Stoics and of Kant that virtue is the only good. Yet if virtue were conceived after their manner, as a heroic and sublimated

attitude of the will, of which the world hardly afforded any example, how should the whole whirligig of life be good also? How should moralism, that frowns on this wicked world, be reconciled with pantheism and optimism, that hug it to their bosom? By the ingenious if rather melodramatic notion that we should hug it with a bear's hug, that virtue consisted (as Royce often put it) in holding evil by the throat; so that the world was good because it was a good world to strangle, and if we only managed to do so, the more it deserved strangling the better world it was. But this Herculean feat must not be considered as something to accomplish once for all; the labours of Hercules must be not twelve but infinite, since his virtue consisted in performing them, and if he ever rested or was received into Olympus he would have left virtue—the only good—behind. The wickedness of the world was no reason for quitting it; on the contrary, it invited us to plunge into all its depths and live through every phase of it; virtue was severe but not squeamish. It lived by endless effort, turbid vitality, and *Sturm und Drang*. Moralism and an apology for evil

could thus be reconciled and merged in the praises of tragic experience.

This had been the burden of Hegel's philosophy of life, which Royce admired and adopted. Hegel and his followers seem to be fond of imagining that they are moving in a tragedy. But because Aeschylus and Sophocles were great poets, does it follow that life would be cheap if it did not resemble their fables? The life of tragic heroes is not good; it is misguided, unnecessary, and absurd. Yet that is what romantic philosophy would condemn us to; we must all strut and roar. We must lend ourselves to the partisan earnestness of persons and nations calling their rivals villains and themselves heroes; but this earnestness will be of the histrionic German sort, made to order and transferable at short notice from one object to another, since what truly matters is not that we should achieve our ostensible aim (which Hegel contemptuously called ideal) but that we should carry on perpetually, if possible with a *crescendo*, the strenuous experience of living in a gloriously bad world, and always working to reform it, with the comforting

speculative assurance that we never can succeed. We never can succeed, I mean, in rendering reform less necessary or life happier; but of course in any specific reform we may succeed half the time, thereby sowing the seeds of new and higher evils, to keep the edge of virtue keen. And in reality we, or the Absolute in us, are succeeding all the time; the play is always going on, and the play's the thing.

It was inevitable that Royce should have been at home only in this circle of Protestant and German intuitions; a more refined existence would have seemed to him to elude moral experience. Although he was born in California he had never got used to the sunshine; he had never tasted peace. His spirit was that of courage and labour. He was tender in a bashful way, as if in tenderness there was something pathological, as indeed to his sense there was, since he conceived love and loyalty to be divine obsessions refusing to be rationalised; he saw their essence in the child who clings to an old battered doll rather than accept a new and better one. Following orthodox tradition in philosophy, he insisted on seeing

reason at the bottom of things as well as at the top, so that he never could understand either the root or the flower of anything. He watched the movement of events as if they were mysterious music, and instead of their causes and potentialities he tried to divine their *motif*. On current affairs his judgements were highly seasoned and laboriously wise. If anything escaped him, it was only the simplicity of what is best. His reward was that he became a prophet to a whole class of earnest, troubled people who, having discarded doctrinal religion, wished to think their life worth living when, to look at what it contained, it might not have seemed so; it reassured them to learn that a strained and joyless existence was not their unlucky lot, or a consequence of their solemn folly, but was the necessary fate of all good men and angels. Royce had always experienced and seen about him a groping, burdened, mediocre life; he had observed how fortune is continually lying in ambush for us, in order to bring good out of evil and evil out of good. In his age and country all was change, preparation, hurry, material achievement; nothing

was an old and sufficient possession; nowhere, or very much in the background, any leisure, simplicity, security, or harmony. The whole scene was filled with arts and virtues which were merely useful or remedial. The most pressing arts, like war and forced labour, presuppose evil, work immense havoc, and take the place of greater possible goods. The most indispensable virtues, like courage and industry, do likewise. But these seemed in Royce's world the only honourable things, and he took them to be typical of all art and virtue—a tremendous error. It is very true, however, that in the welter of material existence no concrete thing can be good or evil in every respect; and so long as our rough arts and virtues do more good than harm we give them honourable names, such as unselfishness, patriotism, or religion; and it remains a mark of good breeding among us to practise them instinctively. But an absolute love of such forced arts and impure virtues is itself a vice; it is, as the case may be, barbarous, vain, or fanatical. It mistakes something specific—some habit or emotion which may be or may have been

good in some respect, or under some circumstances the lesser of two evils—for the very principle of excellence. But good and evil, like light and shade, are ethereal; all things, events, persons, and conventional virtues are in themselves utterly valueless, save as an immaterial harmony (of which mind is an expression) plays about them on occasion, when their natures meet propitiously, and bathes them in some tint of happiness or beauty. This immaterial harmony may be made more and more perfect; the difficulties in the way of perfection, either in man, in society, or in universal nature, are physical not logical. Worship of barbarous virtue is the blackest conservatism; it shuts the gate of heaven, and surrenders existence to perpetual follies and crimes. Moralism itself is a superstition. In its abstract form it is moral, too moral; it adores the conventional conscience, or perhaps a morbid one. In its romantic form, moralism becomes barbarous and actually immoral; it obstinately craves action and stress for their own sake, experience in the gross, and a good-and-bad way of living.

Royce sometimes conceded that there

might be some pure goods, music, for instance, or mathematics; but the impure moral goods were better and could not be spared. Such a concession, however, if it had been taken to heart, would have ruined his whole moral philosophy. The romanticist must maintain that *only* what is painful can be noble and *only* what is lurid bright. A taste for turbid and contrasted values would soon seem perverse when once anything perfect had been seen and loved. Would it not have been better to leave out the worst of the crimes and plagues that have heightened the tragic value of the world? But if so, why stop before we had deleted them all? We should presently be horrified at the mere thought of passions that before had been found necessary by the barbarous tragedian to keep his audience awake; and the ear at the same time would become sensitive to a thousand harmonies that had been inaudible in the hurly-burly of romanticism. The romanticist thinks he has life by virtue of his confusion and torment, whereas in truth that torment and confusion are his incipient death, and it is only the modicum of harmony he has achieved in

his separate faculties that keeps him alive at all. As Aristotle taught, unmixed harmony would be intensest life. The spheres might make a sweet and perpetual music, and a happy God is at least possible.

It was not in this direction, however, that Royce broke away on occasion from his Hegelian ethics; he did so in the direction of ethical dogmatism and downright sincerity. The deepest thing in him personally was conscience, firm recognition of duty, and the democratic and American spirit of service. He could not adopt a moral bias histrionically, after the manner of Hegel or Nietzsche. To those hardened professionals any rôle was acceptable, the more commanding the better; but the good Royce was like a sensitive amateur, refusing the rôle of villain, however brilliant and necessary to the play. In contempt of his own speculative insight, or in an obedience to it which forgot it for the time being, he lost himself in his part, and felt that it was infinitely important to be cast only for the most virtuous of characters. He retained inconsistently the Jewish allegiance to a God essentially the vindicator of only one

of the combatants, not in this world often the victor; he could not stomach the providential scoundrels which the bad taste of Germany, and of Carlyle and Browning, was wont to glorify. The last notable act of his life was an illustration of this, when he uttered a ringing public denunciation of the sinking of the *Lusitania*. Orthodox Hegelians might well have urged that here, if anywhere, was a plain case of the providential function of what, from a finite merely moral point of view, was an evil in order to make a higher good possible—the virtue of German self-assertion and of American self-assertion in antithesis to it, synthesised in the concrete good of war and victory, or in the perhaps more blessed good of defeat. What could be more unphilosophical and *gedankenlos* than the intrusion of mere morality into the higher idea of world-development? Was not the Universal Spirit compelled to bifurcate into just such Germans and just such Americans, in order to attain self-consciousness by hating, fighting against, and vanquishing itself? Certainly it was American duty to be angry, as it was German duty to be

ruthless. The Idea liked to see its fighting-cocks at it in earnest, since that was what it had bred them for; but both were good cocks. Villains, as Hegel had observed in describing Greek tragedy, were not less self-justified than heroes; they were simply the heroes of a lower stage of culture. America and England remained at the stage of individualism; Germany had advanced to the higher stage of organisation. Perhaps this necessary war was destined, through the apparent defeat of Germany, to bring England and America up to the German level. Of course; and yet somehow, on this occasion, Royce passed over these profound considerations, which life-long habit must have brought to his lips. A Socratic demon whispered No, No in his ear; it would have been better for such things never to be. The murder of those thousand passengers was not a providential act, requisite to spread abroad a vitalising war; it was a crime to execrate altogether. It would have been better for Hegel, or whoever was responsible for it, if a millstone had been hanged about his neck and he, and not those little ones, had been drowned

at the bottom of the sea. Of this terrestrial cock-pit Royce was willing to accept the agony, but not the ignominy. The other cock was a wicked bird.

This honest lapse from his logic was habitual with him at the sight of sin, and sin in his eyes was a fearful reality. His conscience spoiled the pantheistic serenity of his system; and what was worse (for he was perfectly aware of the contradiction) it added a deep, almost remorseful unrest to his hard life. What calm could there be in the double assurance that it was really right that things should be wrong, but that it was really wrong not to strive to right them? There was no conflict, he once observed, between science and religion, but the real conflict was between religion and morality. There could indeed be no conflict in his mind between faith and science, because his faith began by accepting all facts and all scientific probabilities in order to face them religiously. But there was an invincible conflict between religion as he conceived it and morality, because morality takes sides and regards one sort of motive and one kind of result as better than another,

whereas religion according to him gloried in everything, even in the evil, as fulfilling the will of God. Of course the practice of virtue was not excluded; it was just as needful as evil was in the scheme of the whole; but while the effort of morality was requisite, the judgements of morality were absurd. Now I think we may say that a man who finds himself in such a position has a divided mind, and that while he has wrestled with the deepest questions like a young giant, he has not won the fight. I mean, he has not seen his way to any one of the various possibilities about the nature of things, but has remained entangled, sincerely, nobly, and pathetically, in contrary traditions stronger than himself. In the goodly company of philosophers he is an intrepid martyr.

In metaphysics as in morals Royce perpetually laboured the same points, yet they never became clear; they covered a natural complexity in the facts which his idealism could not disentangle. There was a voluminous confusion in his thought; some clear principles and ultimate possibilities turned up in it, now presenting one face and now

another, like chips carried down a swollen stream; but the most powerful currents were below the surface, and the whole movement was hard to trace. He had borrowed from Hegel a way of conceiving systems of philosophy, and also the elements of his own thought, which did not tend to clarify them. He did not think of correcting what incoherence there might remain in any view, and then holding it in reserve, as one of the possibilities, until facts should enable us to decide whether it was true or not. Instead he clung to the incoherence as if it had been the heart of the position, in order to be driven by it to some other position altogether, so that while every view seemed to be considered, criticised, and in a measure retained (since the argument continued on the same lines, however ill-chosen they might have been originally), yet justice was never done to it; it was never clarified, made consistent with itself, and then accepted or rejected in view of the evidence. Hence a vicious and perplexing suggestion that philosophies are bred out of philosophies, not out of men in the presence of things. Hence too a sophistical effort to find every-

thing self-contradictory, and in some disquieting way both true and false, as if there were not an infinite number of perfectly consistent systems which the world might have illustrated.

Consider, for instance, his chief and most puzzling contention, that all minds are parts of one mind. It is easy, according to the meaning we give to the word mind, to render this assertion clear and true, or clear and false, or clear and doubtful (because touching unknown facts), or utterly absurd. It is obvious that all minds are parts of one flux or system of experiences, as all bodies are parts of one system of bodies. Again, if mind is identified with its objects, and people are said to be "of one mind" when they are thinking of the same thing, it is certain that many minds are often identical in part, and they would all be identical with portions of an omniscient mind that should perceive all that they severally experienced. The question becomes doubtful if what we mean by oneness of mind is unity of type; our information or plausible guesses cannot assure us how many sorts of experience may exist, or to what extent their develop-

ment (when they develop) follows the same lines of evolution. The animals would have to be consulted, and the other planets, and the infinite recesses of time. The strait-jacket which German idealism has provided is certainly far too narrow even for the varieties of human imagination. Finally, the assertion becomes absurd when it is understood to suggest that an actual instance of thinking, in which something, say the existence of America, is absent or denied, can be part of another actual instance of thinking in which it is present and asserted. But this whole method of treating the matter—and we might add anything that observation might warrant us in adding about multiple personalities—would leave out the problem that agitated Royce and that bewildered his readers. He wanted all minds to be one in some way which should be logically and morally necessary, and which yet, as he could not help feeling, was morally and logically impossible.

For pure transcendentalism, which was Royce's technical method, the question does not arise at all. Transcendentalism is an attitude or a point of view rather than a

system. Its Absolute is thinking "as such," wherever thought may exert itself. The notion that there are separate instances of thought is excluded, because space, time, and number belong to the visionary world posited by thought, not to the function of thinking; individuals are figments of constructive fancy, as are material objects. The stress of moral being is the same wherever it may fall, and there are no finite selves, or relations between thinkers; also no infinite self, because on this principle the Absolute is not an existent being, a psychological monster, but a station or office; its essence is a task. Actual thinking is therefore never a part of the Absolute, but always the Absolute itself. Thinkers, finite or infinite, would be existing persons or masses of feelings; such things are dreamt of only. *Any* system of existences, *any* truth or matter of fact waiting to be recognised, contradicts the transcendental insight and stultifies it. The all-inclusive mind is my mind as I think, mind in its living function, and beyond that philosophy cannot go.

Royce, however, while often reasoning on this principle, was incapable of not going

beyond it, or of always remembering it. He could not help believing that constructive fancy not only feigns individuals and instances of thought, but is actually seated in them. The Absolute, for instance, must be not merely the abstract subject or transcendental self in all of us (although it was that too), but an actual synthetic universal mind, the God of Aristotle and of Christian theology. Nor was it easy for Royce, a sincere soul and a friend of William James, not to be a social realist; I mean, not to admit that there are many collateral human minds, in temporal existential relations to one another, any of which may influence another, but never supplant it nor materially include it. Finite experience was not a mere element in infinite experience; it was a tragic totality in itself. I was not God looking at myself, I was myself looking for God. Yet this strain was utterly incompatible with the principles of transcendentalism; it turned philosophy into a simple anticipation of science, if not into an indulgence in literary psychology. Knowledge would then have been only faith leaping across the chasm of coexistence and guessing

the presence and nature of what surrounds us by some hint of material influence or brotherly affinity. Both the credulity and the finality which such naturalism implies were offensive to Royce, and contrary to his sceptical and mystical instincts. Was there some middle course?

The audience in a theatre stand in a transcendental relation to the persons and events in the play. The performance may take place to-day and last one hour, while the fable transports us to some heroic epoch or to an age that never existed, and stretches through days and perhaps years of fancied time. Just so transcendental thinking, while actually timeless and not distributed among persons, might survey infinite time and rehearse the passions and thoughts of a thousand characters. Thought, after all, needs objects, however fictitious and ideal they may be; it could not think if it thought nothing. This indispensable world of appearance is far more interesting than the reality that evokes it; the qualities and divisions found in the appearance diversify the monotonous function of pure thinking and render it concrete. Instances of thought

and particular minds may thus be introduced consistently into a transcendental system, provided they are distinguished not by their own times and places, but only by their themes. The transcendental mind would be a pure poet, with no earthly life, but living only in his works, and in the times and persons of his fable. This view, firmly and consistently held, would deserve the name of absolute idealism, which Royce liked to give to his own system. But he struggled to fuse it with social realism, with which it is radically incompatible. Particular minds and the whole process of time, for absolute idealism, are *ideas* only; they are thought of and surveyed, they never think or lapse actually. For this reason genuine idealists can speak so glibly of the mind of a nation or an age. It is just as real and unreal to them as the mind of an individual; for within the human individual they can trace unities that run through and beyond him, so that parts of him, identical with parts of other people, form units as living as himself; for it is all a web of themes, not a concourse of existences. This is the very essence and pride of idealism,

that knowledge is not knowledge of the world but is the world itself, and that the units of discourse, which are interwoven and crossed units, are the only individuals in being. You may call them persons, because "person" means a mask; but you cannot call them souls. They are knots in the web of history. They are words in their context, and the only spirit in them is the sense they have for me.

Royce, however, in saying all this, also wished not to say it, and his two thick volumes on *The World and the Individual* leave their subject wrapped in utter obscurity. Perceiving the fact when he had finished, he very characteristically added a "Supplementary Essay" of a hundred more pages, in finer print, in which to come to the point. Imagine, he said, an absolutely exhaustive map of England spread out upon English soil. The map would be a part of England, yet would reproduce every feature of England, including itself; so that the map would reappear on a smaller scale within itself an infinite number of times, like a mirror reflected in a mirror. In this way we might be individuals within a larger

individual, and no less actual and complete than he. Does this solve the problem? If we take the illustration as it stands, there is still only one individual in existence, the material England, all the maps being parts of its single surface; nor will it at all resemble the maps, since it will be washed by the sea and surrounded by foreign nations, and not, like the maps, by other Englands enveloping it. If, on the contrary, we equalise the status of all the members of the series, by making it infinite in both directions, then there would be no England at all, but only map within map of England. There would be no absolute mind inclusive but not included, and the Absolute would be the series as a whole, utterly different from any of its members. It would be a series while they were maps, a truth while they were minds; and if the Absolute from the beginning had been regarded as a truth only, there never would have been any difficulty in the existence of individuals under it. Moreover, if the individuals are all exactly alike, does not their exact similarity defeat the whole purpose of the speculation, which was to vindicate the equal

being mild and bookish, it is thought they ought to be teachers, they might teach something else than philosophy; or if philosophy is the only thing they are competent to teach, it might at least not be their own, but some classic system with which, and against which, mankind is already inoculated —preferably the civilised ethics and charming myths of Plato and Aristotle, which everybody will be the better for knowing and few the worse for believing. At best, the true philosopher can fulfil his mission very imperfectly, which is to pilot himself, or at most a few voluntary companions who may find themselves in the same boat. It is not easy for him to shout, or address a crowd; he must be silent for long seasons; for he is watching stars that move slowly and in courses that it is possible though difficult to foresee; and he is crushing all things in his heart as in a winepress, until his life and their secret flow out together.

The tendency to gather and to breed philosophers in universities does not belong to ages of free and humane reflection: it is scholastic and proper to the Middle Ages and to Germany. And the reason is not far to

seek. When there is a philosophical orthodoxy, and speculation is expected to be a reasoned defence of some funded inspiration, it becomes itself corporate and traditional, and requires centres of teaching, endowment, and propaganda. Fundamental questions have been settled by the church, the government, or the Zeitgeist, and the function of the professor, himself bred in that school, is to transmit its lore to the next generation, with such original touches of insight or eloquence as he may command. To maintain and elucidate such a tradition, all the schools and universities of Christendom were originally founded; and if philosophy seemed sometimes to occupy but a small place in them—as for instance in the old-fashioned American college—it was only because the entire discipline and instruction of the place were permeated with a particular system of faith and morals, which it was almost superfluous to teach in the abstract. In those universities where philosophical controversy is rife, its traditional and scholastic character is no less obvious; it lives less on meditation than on debate, and turns on proofs, objections, paradoxes, or expedients for seeming

CHAPTER V

LATER SPECULATIONS

A QUESTION which is curious in itself and may become important in the future is this: How has migration to the new world affected philosophical ideas? At first sight we might be tempted, perhaps, to dismiss this question altogether, on the ground that no such effect is discernible. For what do we find in America in the guise of philosophy? In the background, the same Protestant theology as in Europe and the same Catholic theology; on the surface, the same adoption of German idealism, the same vogue of evolution, the same psychology becoming metaphysics, and lately the same revival of a mathematical or logical realism. In no case has the first expression of these various tendencies appeared in America, and no original system that I know of has arisen there. It would

seem, then, that in philosophy, as in letters generally, polite America has continued the common tradition of Christendom, in paths closely parallel to those followed in England; and that modern speculation, which is so very sensitive to changed times, is quite indifferent to distinctions of place.

Perhaps; but I say advisedly *polite* America, for without this qualification what I have been suggesting would hardly be true. Polite America carried over its household gods from puritan England in a spirit of consecration, and it has always wished to remain in communion with whatever its conscience might value in the rest of the world. Yet it has been cut off by distance and by revolutionary prejudice against things ancient or foreign; and it has been disconcerted at the same time by the insensible shifting of the ground under its feet: it has suffered from in-breeding and anæmia. On the other hand, a crude but vital America has sprung up from the soil, undermining, feeding, and transforming the America of tradition.

This young America was originally composed of all the prodigals, truants, and adventurous spirits that the colonial families

produced: it was fed continually by the younger generation, born in a spacious, half-empty world, tending to forget the old straitened morality and to replace it by another, quite jovially human. This truly native America was reinforced by the miscellany of Europe arriving later, not in the hope of founding a godly commonwealth, but only of prospering in an untrammelled one. The horde of immigrants eagerly accepts the external arrangements and social spirit of American life, but never hears of its original austere principles, or relegates them to the same willing oblivion as it does the constraints which it has just escaped—Jewish, Irish, German, Italian, or whatever they may be. We should be seriously deceived if we overlooked for a moment the curious and complex relation between these two Americas.

Let me give one illustration. Professor Norton, the friend of Carlyle, of Burne-Jones, and of Matthew Arnold, and, for the matter of that, the friend of everybody, a most urbane, learned, and exquisite spirit, was descended from a long line of typical New England divines: yet he was loudly accused, in public and in private, of being un-American.

On the other hand, a Frenchman of ripe judgement, who knew him perfectly, once said to me: "Norton wouldn't like to hear it, but he is a terrible Yankee." Both judgements were well grounded. Professor Norton's mind was deeply moralised, discriminating, and sad; and these qualities rightly seemed American to the French observer of New England, but they rightly seemed un-American to the politician from Washington.

Philosophical opinion in America is of course rooted in the genteel tradition. It is either inspired by religious faith, and designed to defend it, or else it is created somewhat artificially in the larger universities, by deliberately proposing problems which, without being very pressing to most Americans, are supposed to be necessary problems of thought. Yet if you expected academic philosophers in America, because the background of their minds seems perfunctory, to resemble academic philosophers elsewhere, you would be often mistaken. There is no prig's paradise in those regions. Many of the younger professors of philosophy are no longer the sort of persons that might as well have been clergymen or schoolmasters: they

have rather the type of mind of a doctor, an engineer, or a social reformer; the wide-awake young man who can do most things better than old people, and who knows it. He is less eloquent and apostolic than the older generation of philosophers, very professional in tone and conscious of his *Fach*; not that he would deny for a moment the many-sided ignorance to which nowadays we are all reduced, but that he thinks he can get on very well without the things he ignores. His education has been more pretentious than thorough; his style is deplorable; social pressure and his own great eagerness have condemned him to over-work, committee meetings, early marriage, premature authorship, and lecturing two or three times a day under forced draught. He has no peace in himself, no window open to a calm horizon, and in his heart perhaps little taste for mere scholarship or pure speculation. Yet, like the plain soldier staggering under his clumsy equipment, he is cheerful; he keeps his faith in himself and in his allotted work, puts up with being toasted only on one side, remains open-minded, whole-hearted, appreciative, helpful, confident of the future of goodness

and of science. In a word, he is a cell in that teeming democratic body; he draws from its warm, contagious activities the sanctions of his own life and, less consciously, the spirit of his philosophy.

It is evident that such minds will have but a loose hold on tradition, even on the genteel tradition in American philosophy. Not that in general they oppose or dislike it; their alienation from it is more radical; they forget it. Religion was the backbone of that tradition, and towards religion, in so far as it is a private sentiment or presumption, they feel a tender respect; but in so far as religion is a political institution, seeking to coerce the mind and the conscience, one would think they had never heard of it. They feel it is as much every one's right to choose and cherish a religion as to choose and cherish a wife, without having his choice rudely commented upon in public. Hitherto America has been the land of universal good-will, confidence in life, inexperience of poisons. Until yesterday it believed itself immune from the hereditary plagues of mankind. It could not credit the danger of being suffocated or infected by any sinister principle. The

more errors and passions were thrown into the melting-pot, the more certainly would they neutralise one another and would truth come to the top. Every system was met with a frank gaze. "Come on," people seemed to say to it, "show us what you are good for. We accept no claims; we ask for no credentials; we just give you a chance. Plato, the Pope, and Mrs. Eddy shall have one vote each." After all, I am not sure that this toleration without deference is not a cruel test for systematic delusions: it lets the daylight into the stage.

Philosophic tradition in America has merged almost completely in German idealism. In a certain sense this system did not need to be adopted: something very like it had grown up spontaneously in New England in the form of transcendentalism and unitarian theology. Even the most emancipated and positivistic of the latest thinkers—pragmatists, new realists, pure empiricists—have been bred in the atmosphere of German idealism; and this fact should not be forgotten in approaching their views. The element of this philosophy which has sunk deepest, and which is reinforced by the

influence of psychology, is the critical attitude towards knowledge, subjectivism, withdrawal into experience, on the assumption that experience is something substantial. Experience was regarded by earlier empiricists as a method for making real discoveries, a safer witness than reasoning to what might exist in nature; but now experience is taken to be in itself the only real existence, the ultimate object that all thought and theory must regard. This empiricism does not look to the building up of science, but rather to a more thorough criticism and disintegration of conventional beliefs, those of empirical science included. It is in the intrepid prosecution of this criticism and disintegration that American philosophy has won its wings.

It may seem a strange Nemesis that a critical philosophy, which on principle reduces everything to the consciousness of it, should end by reducing consciousness itself to other things; yet the path of this boomerang is not hard to trace. The word consciousness originally meant what Descartes called thought or cogitation—the faculty which attention has of viewing together objects which may belong together neither in their

logical essence nor in their natural existence. It colours events with memories and facts with emotions, and adds images to words. This synthetic and transitive function of consciousness is a positive fact about it, to be discovered by study, like any other somewhat recondite fact. You will discover it if you institute a careful comparison and contrast between the way things hang together in thought and the way they hang together in nature. To have discerned the wonderful perspectives both of imagination and of will seems to me the chief service done to philosophy by Kant and his followers. It is the positive, the non-malicious element in their speculation; and in the midst of their psychologism in logic and their egotism about nature and history, consciousness seems to be the one province of being which they have thrown true light upon. But just because this is a positive province of being, an actual existence to be discovered and dogmatically believed in, it is not what a malicious criticism of knowledge can end with. Not the nature of consciousness, but the data of consciousness, are what the critic must fall back upon in the last resort; and Hume had been in

this respect a more penetrating critic than Kant. One cannot, by inspecting consciousness, find consciousness itself as a passive datum, because consciousness is cogitation; one can only take note of the immediate objects of consciousness, in such private perspective as sense or imagination may present.

Philosophy seems to be richer in theories than in words to express them in; and much confusion results from the necessity of using old terms in new meanings. In this way, when consciousness is disregarded, in the proper sense of cogitation, the name of consciousness can be transferred to the stream of objects immediately present to consciousness; so that consciousness comes to signify the evolving field of appearances unrolled before any person.

This equivocation is favoured by the allied ambiguity of an even commoner term, idea. It is plausible to say that consciousness is a stream of ideas, because an idea may mean an opinion, a cogitation, a view taken of some object. And it is also plausible to say that ideas are objects of consciousness, because an idea may mean an image, a passive datum.

Passive data may be of any sort you like—things, qualities, relations, propositions—but they are never cogitations; and to call *them* consciousness or components of consciousness is false and inexcusable. The ideas that may be so called are not these passive objects, but active thoughts. Indeed, when the psychological critic has made this false step, he is not able to halt: his method will carry him presently from this position to one even more paradoxical.

Is memory knowledge of a past that is itself absent and dead, or is it a present experience? A complete philosophy would doubtless reply that it is both; but psychological criticism can take cognisance of memory only as a mass of present images and presumptions. The experience remembered may indeed be exactly recovered and be present again; but the fact that it was present before cannot possibly be given now; it can only be suggested and believed.

It is evident, therefore, that the historical order in which data flow is not contained bodily in any one of them. This order is conceived; the hypothesis is framed instinctively and instinctively credited, but it is

only an hypothesis. And it is often wrong, as is proved by all the constitutional errors of memory and legend. Belief in the order of our personal experiences is accordingly just as dogmatic, daring, and realistic as the parallel belief in a material world. The psychological critic must attribute both beliefs to a mere tendency to feign; and if he is true to his method he must discard the notion that the objects of consciousness are arranged in psychological sequences, making up separate minds. In other words, he must discard the notion of consciousness, not only in the sense of thought or cogitation, but in the sense he himself had given it of a stream of ideas. Actual objects, he will now admit, not without a certain surprise, are not ideas at all: they do not lie in the mind (for there is no mind to be found) but in the medium that observably surrounds them. Things are just what they seem to be, and to say they are consciousness or compose a consciousness is absurd. The so-called appearances, according to a perfected criticism of knowledge, are nothing private or internal; they are merely those portions of external objects which from time to time impress

themselves on somebody's organs of sense and are responded to by his nervous system.

Such is the doctrine of the new American realists, in whose devoted persons the logic of idealism has worked itself out and appropriately turned idealism itself into its opposite. Consciousness, they began by saying, is merely a stream of ideas; but then ideas are merely the parts of objects which happen to appear to a given person; but again, a person (for all you or he can discover) is nothing but his body and those parts of other objects which appear to him; and, finally, to appear, in any discoverable sense, cannot be to have a ghostly sort of mental existence, but merely to be reacted upon by an animal body. Thus we come to the conclusion that objects alone exist, and that consciousness is a name for certain segments or groups of these objects.

I think we may conjecture why this startling conclusion, that consciousness does not exist, a conclusion suggested somewhat hurriedly by William James, has found a considerable echo in America, and why the system of Avenarius, which makes in the same direction, has been studied there sympathetically. To deny consciousness is to

deny a pre-requisite to the obvious, and to leave the obvious standing alone. That is a relief to an overtaxed and self-impeded generation; it seems a blessed simplification. It gets rid of the undemocratic notion that by being very reflective, circumspect, and subtle you might discover something that most people do not see. They can go on more merrily with their work if they believe that by being so subtle, circumspect, and reflective you would only discover a mare's nest. The elimination of consciousness not only restores the obvious, but proves all parts of the obvious to be equally real. Not only colours, beauties, and passions, but all things formerly suspected of being creatures of thought, such as laws, relations, and abstract qualities, now become components of the existing object, since there is no longer any mental vehicle by which they might have been created and interposed. The young American is thus reassured: his joy in living and learning is no longer chilled by the contempt which idealism used to cast on nature for being imaginary and on science for being intellectual. All fictions and all abstractions are now declared to be parcels

of the objective world; it will suffice to live on, to live forward, in order to see everything as it really is.

If we look now at these matters from a slightly different angle, we shall find psychological criticism transforming the notion of truth much as it has transformed the notion of consciousness. In the first place, there is a similar ambiguity in the term. The truth properly means the sum of all true propositions, what omniscience would assert, the whole ideal system of qualities and relations which the world has exemplified or will exemplify. The truth is all things seen under the form of eternity. In this sense, a psychological criticism cannot be pertinent to the truth at all, the truth not being anything psychological or human. It is an ideal realm of being properly enough not discussed by psychologists; yet so far as I know it is denied by nobody, not even by Protagoras or the pragmatists. If Protagoras said that whatever appears to any man at any moment is true, he doubtless meant true on that subject, true of that appearance: because for a sensualist objects do not extend beyond what he sees of them, so that each of his

perceptions defines its whole object and is infallible. But in that case the truth about the universe is evidently that it is composed of these various sensations, each carrying an opinion impossible for it to abandon or to revise, since to revise the opinion would simply be to bring a fresh object into view. The truth would further be that these sensations and opinions stand to one another in certain definite relations of diversity, succession, duration, *et cætera*, whether any of them happens to assert these relations or not. In the same way, I cannot find that our contemporary pragmatists, in giving their account of what truth is (in a different and quite abstract sense of the word truth), have ever doubted, or so much as noticed, what in all their thinking they evidently assume to be the actual and concrete truth: namely, that there are many states of mind, many labouring opinions more or less useful and good, which actually lead to others, more or less expected and satisfactory. Surely every pragmatist, like every thinking man, always assumes the reality of an actual truth, comprehensive and largely undiscovered, of which he claims to be reporting a portion.

What he rather confusingly calls truth, and wishes to reduce to a pragmatic function, is not this underlying truth, the sum of all true propositions, but merely the abstract quality which all true propositions must have in common, to be called true. By truth he means only correctness. The possibility of correctness in an idea is a great puzzle to him, on account of his idealism, which identifies ideas with their objects; and he asks himself how an idea can ever come to be correct or incorrect, as if it referred to something beyond itself.

The fact is, of course, that an idea can be correct or incorrect only if by the word idea we mean not a datum but an opinion; and the abstract relation of correctness, by virtue of which any opinion is true, is easily stated. An opinion is true if what it is talking about is constituted as the opinion asserts it to be constituted. To test this correctness may be difficult or even impossible in particular cases; in the end we may be reduced to believing on instinct that our fundamental opinions are true; for instance, that we are living through time, and that the past and future are not, as a consistent

idealism would assert, mere notions in the present. But what renders such instinctive opinions true, if they are true, is the fact affirmed being as it is affirmed to be. It is not a question of similarity or derivation between a passive datum and a hidden object; it is a question of identity between the fact asserted and the fact existing. If an opinion could not freely leap to its object, no matter how distant or hypothetical, and assert something of that chosen object, an opinion could not be so much as wrong; for it would not be an opinion about anything.

Psychologists, however, are not concerned with what an opinion asserts logically, but only with what it is existentially; they are asking what existential relations surround an idea when it is called true which are absent when it is called false. Their problem is frankly insoluble; for it requires us to discover what makes up the indicative force of an idea which by hypothesis is a passive datum; as if a grammarian should inquire how a noun in the accusative case could be a verb in the indicative mood.

It was not idly that William James

dedicated his book on Pragmatism to the memory of John Stuart Mill. The principle of psychological empiricism is to look for the elements employed in thinking, and to conclude that thought is nothing but those elements arranged in a certain order. It is true that since the days of Mill analysis has somewhat extended the inventory of these elements, so as to include among simples, besides the data of the five senses, such things as feelings of relation, sensations of movement, vague ill-focused images, and perhaps even telepathic and instinctive intuitions. But some series or group of these immediate data, kept in their crude immediacy, must according to this method furnish the whole answer to our question: the supposed power of an idea to have an object beyond itself, or to be true of any other fact, must be merely a name for a certain position which the given element occupies in relation to other elements in the routine of experience. Knowledge and truth must be forms of contiguity and succession.

We must not be surprised, under these circumstances, if the problem is shifted, and another somewhat akin to it takes its place,

with which the chosen method can really cope. This subterfuge is not voluntary; it is an instinctive effect of fidelity to a point of view which has its special validity, though naturally not applicable in every sphere. We do not observe that politicians abandon their party when it happens to have brought trouble upon the country; their destiny as politicians is precisely to make effective all the consequences, good or evil, which their party policy may involve. So it would be too much to expect a school of philosophers to abandon their method because there are problems it cannot solve; their business is rather to apply their method to everything to which it can possibly be applied; and when they have reached that limit, the very most we can ask, if they are superhumanly modest and wise, is that they should make way gracefully for another school of philosophers.

Now there is a problem, not impossible to confuse with the problem of correctness in ideas, with which psychological criticism can really deal; it is the question of the relation between a sign and the thing signified. Of this relation a genuinely empirical account

can be given; both terms are objects of experience, present or eventual, and the passage between them is made in time by an experienced transition. Nor need the signs which lead to a particular object be always the same, or of one sort; an object may be designated and announced unequivocally by a verbal description, without any direct image, or by images now of one sense and now of another, or by some external relation, such as its place, or by its proper name, if it possesses one; and these designations all convey knowledge of it and may be true signs, if in yielding to their suggestion we are brought eventually to the object meant.

Here, if I am not mistaken, is the genuine application of what the pragmatists call their theory of truth. It concerns merely what links a sign to the thing signified, and renders it a practical substitute for the same. But this empirical analysis of signification has been entangled with more or less hazardous views about truth, such as that an idea is true so long as it is believed to be true, or that it is true if it is good and useful, or that it is not true until it is verified. This last suggestion shows what strange reversals a

wayward personal philosophy may be subject to. Empiricism used to mean reliance on the past; now apparently all empirical truth regards only the future, since truth is said to arise by the verification of some presumption. Presumptions about the past can evidently never be verified; at best they may be corroborated by fresh presumptions about the past, equally dependent for their truth on a verification which in the nature of the case is impossible. At this point the truly courageous empiricist will perhaps say that the real past only means the ideas of the past which we shall form in the future. Consistency is a jewel; and, as in the case of other jewels, we may marvel at the price that some people will pay for it. In any case, we are led to this curious result: that radical empiricism ought to deny that any idea of the past can be true at all.

Such dissolving views, really somewhat like those attributed to Protagoras, do not rest on sober psychological analysis: they express rather a certain impatience and a certain despairing democracy in the field of opinion. Great are the joys of haste and of radicalism, and young philosophers must

not be deprived of them. We may the more justly pass over these small scandals of pragmatism in that William James and his American disciples have hardly cared to defend them, but have turned decidedly in the direction of a universal objectivism.

The spirit of these radical views is not at all negative: it is hopeful, revolutionary, inspired entirely by love of certitude and clearness. It is very sympathetic to science, in so far as science is a personal pursuit and a personal experience, rather than a body of doctrine with moral implications. It is very close to nature, as the lover of nature understands the word. If it denies the existence of the cognitive energy and the colouring medium of mind, it does so only in a formal sense; all the colours with which that medium endows the world remain painted upon it; and all the perspectives and ideal objects of thought are woven into the texture of things. Not, I think, intelligibly or in a coherent fashion; for this new realism is still immature, and if it is ever rendered adequate it will doubtless seem much less original. My point is that in its denial of mind it has no bias against things

intellectual, and if it refuses to admit ideas or even sensations, it does not blink the sensible or ideal objects which ideas and sensations reveal, but rather tries to find a new and (as it perhaps thinks) a more honourable place for them; they are not regarded as spiritual radiations from the natural world, but as parts of its substance.

This may have the ring of materialism; but the temper and faith of these schools are not materialistic. Systematic materialism is one of the philosophies of old age. It is a conviction that may overtake a few shrewd and speculative cynics, who have long observed their own irrationality and that of the world, and have divined its cause; by such men materialism may be embraced without reserve, in all its rigour and pungency. But the materialism of youth is part of a simple faith in sense and in science; it is not exclusive; it admits the co-operation of any other forces—divine, magical, formal, or vital—if appearances anywhere seem to manifest them. The more we interpret the ambiguities or crudities of American writers in this sense, the less we shall misunderstand them.

It seems, then, that the atmosphere of the new world has already affected philosophy in two ways. In the first place, it has accelerated and rendered fearless the disintegration of conventional categories; a disintegration on which modern philosophy has always been at work, and which has precipitated its successive phases. In the second place, the younger cosmopolitan America has favoured the impartial assemblage and mutual confrontation of all sorts of ideas. It has produced, in intellectual matters, a sort of happy watchfulness and insecurity. Never was the human mind master of so many facts and sure of so few principles. Will this suspense and fluidity of thought crystallise into some great new system? Positive gifts of imagination and moral heroism are requisite to make a great philosopher, gifts which must come from the gods and not from circumstances. But if the genius should arise, this vast collection of suggestions and this radical analysis of presumptions which he will find in America may keep him from going astray. Nietzsche said that the earth has been a mad-house long enough. Without contradicting him we might perhaps soften

the expression, and say that philosophy has been long enough an asylum for enthusiasts. It is time for it to become less solemn and more serious. We may be frightened at first to learn on what thin ice we have been skating, in speculation as in government; but we shall not be in a worse plight for knowing it, only wiser to-day and perhaps safer to-morrow.

CHAPTER VI

MATERIALISM AND IDEALISM IN AMERICAN LIFE

THE language and traditions common to England and America are like other family bonds: they draw kindred together at the greater crises in life, but they also occasion at times a little friction and fault-finding. The groundwork of the two societies is so similar, that each nation, feeling almost at home with the other, and almost able to understand its speech, may instinctively resent what hinders it from feeling at home altogether. Differences will tend to seem anomalies that have slipped in by mistake and through somebody's fault. Each will judge the other by his own standards, not feeling, as in the presence of complete foreigners, that he must make an effort of imagination and put himself in another man's shoes.

In matters of morals, manners, and art, the danger of comparisons is not merely that they may prove invidious, by ranging qualities in an order of merit which might wound somebody's vanity; the danger is rather that comparisons may distort comprehension, because in truth good qualities are all different in kind, and free lives are different in spirit. Comparison is the expedient of those who cannot reach the heart of the things compared; and no philosophy is more external and egotistical than that which places the essence of a thing in its relation to something else. In reality, at the centre of every natural being there is something individual and incommensurable, a seed with its native impulses and aspirations, shaping themselves as best they can in their given environment. Variation is a consequence of freedom, and the slight but radical diversity of souls in turn makes freedom requisite. Instead of instituting in his mind any comparisons between the United States and other nations, I would accordingly urge the reader to forget himself and, in so far as such a thing may be possible for him or for me, to transport himself ideally

with me into the outer circumstances of American life, the better to feel its inner temper, and to see how inevitably the American shapes his feelings and judgements, honestly reporting all things as they appear from his new and unobstructed station.

I speak of the American in the singular, as if there were not millions of them, north and south, east and west, of both sexes, of all ages, and of various races, professions, and religions. Of course the one American I speak of is mythical; but to speak in parables is inevitable in such a subject, and it is perhaps as well to do so frankly. There is a sort of poetic ineptitude in all human discourse when it tries to deal with natural and existing things. Practical men may not notice it, but in fact human discourse is intrinsically addressed not to natural existing things but to ideal essences, poetic or logical terms which thought may define and play with. When fortune or necessity diverts our attention from this congenial ideal sport to crude facts and pressing issues, we turn our frail poetic ideas into symbols for those terrible irruptive things. In that paper money of our own stamping, the legal tender

of the mind, we are obliged to reckon all the movements and values of the world. The universal American I speak of is one of these symbols; and I should be still speaking in symbols and creating moral units and a false simplicity, if I spoke of classes pedantically subdivided, or individuals ideally integrated and defined. As it happens, the symbolic American can be made largely adequate to the facts; because, if there are immense differences between individual Americans—for some Americans are black—yet there is a great uniformity in their environment, customs, temper, and thoughts. They have all been uprooted from their several soils and ancestries and plunged together into one vortex, whirling irresistibly in a space otherwise quite empty. To be an American is of itself almost a moral condition, an education, and a career. Hence a single ideal figment can cover a large part of what each American is in his character, and almost the whole of what most Americans are in their social outlook and political judgements.

The discovery of the new world exercised a sort of selection among the inhabitants of Europe. All the colonists, except the negroes,

were voluntary exiles. The fortunate, the deeply rooted, and the lazy remained at home; the wilder instincts or dissatisfaction of others tempted them beyond the horizon. The American is accordingly the most adventurous, or the descendant of the most adventurous, of Europeans. It is in his blood to be socially a radical, though perhaps not intellectually. What has existed in the past, especially in the remote past, seems to him not only not authoritative, but irrelevant, inferior, and outworn. He finds it rather a sorry waste of time to think about the past at all. But his enthusiasm for the future is profound; he can conceive of no more decisive way of recommending an opinion or a practice than to say that it is what everybody is coming to adopt. This expectation of what he approves, or approval of what he expects, makes up his optimism. It is the necessary faith of the pioneer.

Such a temperament is, of course, not maintained in the nation merely by inheritance. Inheritance notoriously tends to restore the average of a race, and plays incidentally many a trick of atavism. What maintains this temperament and makes it

national is social contagion or pressure—something immensely strong in democracies. The luckless American who is born a conservative, or who is drawn to poetic subtlety, pious retreats, or gay passions, nevertheless has the categorical excellence of work, growth, enterprise, reform, and prosperity dinned into his ears: every door is open in this direction and shut in the other; so that he either folds up his heart and withers in a corner—in remote places you sometimes find such a solitary gaunt idealist—or else he flies to Oxford or Florence or Montmartre to save his soul—or perhaps not to save it.

The optimism of the pioneer is not limited to his view of himself and his own future: it starts from that; but feeling assured, safe, and cheery within, he looks with smiling and most kindly eyes on everything and everybody about him. Individualism, roughness, and self-trust are supposed to go with selfishness and a cold heart; but I suspect that is a prejudice. It is rather dependence, insecurity, and mutual jostling that poison our placid gregarious brotherhood; and fanciful passionate demands upon people's affections, when they are dis-

appointed, as they soon must be, breed ill-will and a final meanness. The milk of human kindness is less apt to turn sour if the vessel that holds it stands steady, cool, and separate, and is not too often uncorked. In his affections the American is seldom passionate, often deep, and always kindly. If it were given me to look into the depths of a man's heart, and I did not find goodwill at the bottom, I should say without any hesitation, You are not an American. But as the American is an individualist his goodwill is not officious. His instinct is to think well of everybody, and to wish everybody well, but in a spirit of rough comradeship, expecting every man to stand on his own legs and to be helpful in his turn. When he has given his neighbour a chance he thinks he has done enough for him; but he feels it is an absolute duty to do that. It will take some hammering to drive a coddling socialism into America.

As self-trust may pass into self-sufficiency, so optimism, kindness, and goodwill may grow into a habit of doting on everything. To the good American many subjects are sacred: sex is sacred, women are sacred,

children are sacred, business is sacred, America is sacred, Masonic lodges and college clubs are sacred. This feeling grows out of the good opinion he wishes to have of these things, and serves to maintain it. If he did not regard all these things as sacred he might come to doubt sometimes if they were wholly good. Of this kind, too, is the idealism of single ladies in reduced circumstances who can see the soul of beauty in ugly things, and are perfectly happy because their old dog has such pathetic eyes, their minister is so eloquent, their garden with its three sunflowers is so pleasant, their dead friends were so devoted, and their distant relations are so rich.

Consider now the great emptiness of America: not merely the primitive physical emptiness, surviving in some regions, and the continental spacing of the chief natural features, but also the moral emptiness of a settlement where men and even houses are easily moved about, and no one, almost, lives where he was born or believes what he has been taught. Not that the American has jettisoned these impedimenta in anger; they have simply slipped from him as he moves.

Great empty spaces bring a sort of freedom to both soul and body. You may pitch your tent where you will; or if ever you decide to build anything, it can be in a style of your own devising. You have room, fresh materials, few models, and no critics. You trust your own experience, not only because you must, but because you find you may do so safely and prosperously; the forces that determine fortune are not yet too complicated for one man to explore. Your detachable condition makes you lavish with money and cheerfully experimental; you lose little if you lose all, since you remain completely yourself. At the same time your absolute initiative gives you practice in coping with novel situations, and in being original; it teaches you shrewd management. Your life and mind will become dry and direct, with few decorative flourishes. In your works everything will be stark and pragmatic; you will not understand why anybody should make those little sacrifices to instinct or custom which we call grace. The fine arts will seem to you academic luxuries, fit to amuse the ladies, like Greek and Sanskrit; for while you will perfectly

appreciate generosity in men's purposes, you will not admit that the execution of these purposes can be anything but business. Unfortunately the essence of the fine arts is that the execution should be generous too, and delightful in itself; therefore the fine arts will suffer, not so much in their express professional pursuit—for then they become practical tasks and a kind of business—as in that diffused charm which qualifies all human action when men are artists by nature. Elaboration, which is something to accomplish, will be preferred to simplicity, which is something to rest in; manners will suffer somewhat; speech will suffer horribly. For the American the urgency of his novel attack upon matter, his zeal in gathering its fruits, precludes meanderings in primrose paths; devices must be short cuts, and symbols must be mere symbols. If his wife wants luxuries, of course she may have them; and if he has vices, that can be provided for too; but they must all be set down under those headings in his ledgers.

At the same time, the American is imaginative; for where life is intense, imagination is intense also. Were he not

imaginative he would not live so much in the future. But his imagination is practical, and the future it forecasts is immediate; it works with the clearest and least ambiguous terms known to his experience, in terms of number, measure, contrivance, economy, and speed. He is an idealist working on matter. Understanding as he does the material potentialities of things, he is successful in invention, conservative in reform, and quick in emergencies. All his life he jumps into the train after it has started and jumps out before it has stopped; and he never once gets left behind, or breaks a leg. There is an enthusiasm in his sympathetic handling of material forces which goes far to cancel the illiberal character which it might otherwise assume. The good workman hardly distinguishes his artistic intention from the potency in himself and in things which is about to realise that intention. Accordingly his ideals fall into the form of premonitions and prophecies; and his studious prophecies often come true. So do the happy workmanlike ideals of the American. When a poor boy, perhaps, he dreams of an education, and presently he gets an education, or at least a degree; he

dreams of growing rich, and he grows rich—only more slowly and modestly, perhaps, than he expected; he dreams of marrying his Rebecca and, even if he marries a Leah instead, he ultimately finds in Leah his Rebecca after all. He dreams of helping to carry on and to accelerate the movement of a vast, seething, progressive society, and he actually does so. Ideals clinging so close to nature are almost sure of fulfilment; the American beams with a certain self-confidence and sense of mastery; he feels that God and nature are working with him.

Idealism in the American accordingly goes hand in hand with present contentment and with foresight of what the future very likely will actually bring. He is not a revolutionist; he believes he is already on the right track and moving towards an excellent destiny. In revolutionists, on the contrary, idealism is founded on dissatisfaction and expresses it. What exists seems to them an absurd jumble of irrational accidents and bad habits, and they want the future to be based on reason and to be the pellucid embodiment of all their maxims. All their zeal is for something radically dif-

ferent from the actual and (if they only knew it) from the possible; it is ideally simple, and they love it and believe in it because their nature craves it. They think life would be set free by the destruction of all its organs. They are therefore extreme idealists in the region of hope, but not at all, as poets and artists are, in the region of perception and memory. In the atmosphere of civilised life they miss all the refraction and all the fragrance; so that in their conception of actual things they are apt to be crude realists; and their ignorance and inexperience of the moral world, unless it comes of ill-luck, indicates their incapacity for education. Now incapacity for education, when united with great inner vitality, is one root of idealism. It is what condemns us all, in the region of sense, to substitute perpetually what we are capable of imagining for what things may be in themselves; it is what condemns us, wherever it extends, to think *a priori*; it is what keeps us bravely and incorrigibly pursuing what we call the good—that is, what would fulfil the demands of our nature—however little provision the fates may have made for it. But the want

of insight on the part of revolutionists touching the past and the present infects in an important particular their idealism about the future; it renders their dreams of the future unrealisable. For in human beings—this may not be true of other animals, more perfectly preformed—experience is necessary to pertinent and concrete thinking; even our primitive instincts are blind until they stumble upon some occasion that solicits them; and they can be much transformed or deranged by their first partial satisfactions. Therefore a man who does not idealise his experience, but idealises *a priori*, is incapable of true prophecy; when he dreams he raves, and the more he criticises the less he helps. American idealism, on the contrary, is nothing if not helpful, nothing if not pertinent to practicable transformations; and when the American frets, it is because whatever is useless and impertinent, be it idealism or inertia, irritates him; for it frustrates the good results which he sees might so easily have been obtained.

The American is wonderfully alive; and his vitality, not having often found a suitable outlet, makes him appear agitated on

the surface; he is always letting off an unnecessarily loud blast of incidental steam. Yet his vitality is not superficial; it is inwardly prompted, and as sensitive and quick as a magnetic needle. He is inquisitive, and ready with an answer to any question that he may put to himself of his own accord; but if you try to pour instruction into him, on matters that do not touch his own spontaneous life, he shows the most extraordinary powers of resistance and oblivescence; so that he often is remarkably expert in some directions and surprisingly obtuse in others. He seems to bear lightly the sorrowful burden of human knowledge. In a word, he is young.

What sense is there in this feeling, which we all have, that the American is young? His country is blessed with as many elderly people as any other, and his descent from Adam, or from the Darwinian rival of Adam, cannot be shorter than that of his European cousins. Nor are his ideas always very fresh. Trite and rigid bits of morality and religion, with much seemly and antique political lore, remain axiomatic in him, as in the mind of a child; he may carry all this

about with an unquestioning familiarity which does not comport understanding. To keep traditional sentiments in this way insulated and uncriticised is itself a sign of youth. A good young man is naturally conservative and loyal on all those subjects which his experience has not brought to a test; advanced opinions on politics, marriage, or literature are comparatively rare in America; they are left for the ladies to discuss, and usually to condemn, while the men get on with their work. In spite of what is old-fashioned in his more general ideas, the American is unmistakably young; and this, I should say, for two reasons: one, that he is chiefly occupied with his immediate environment, and the other, that his reactions upon it are inwardly prompted, spontaneous, and full of vivacity and self-trust. His views are not yet lengthened; his will is not yet broken or transformed. The present moment, however, in this, as in other things, may mark a great change in him; he is perhaps now reaching his majority, and all I say may hardly apply to-day, and may not apply at all to-morrow. I speak of him as I have known him; and whatever

moral strength may accrue to him later, I am not sorry to have known him in his youth. The charm of youth, even when it is a little boisterous, lies in nearness to the impulses of nature, in a quicker and more obvious obedience to that pure, seminal principle which, having formed the body and its organs, always directs their movements, unless it is forced by vice or necessity to make them crooked, or to suspend them. Even under the inevitable crust of age the soul remains young, and, wherever it is able to break through, sprouts into something green and tender. We are all as young at heart as the most youthful American, but the seed in his case has fallen upon virgin soil, where it may spring up more bravely and with less respect for the giants of the wood. Peoples seem older when their perennial natural youth is encumbered with more possessions and prepossessions, and they are mindful of the many things they have lost or missed. The American is not mindful of them.

In America there is a tacit optimistic assumption about existence, to the effect that the more existence the better. The soulless

critic might urge that quantity is only a physical category, implying no excellence, but at best an abundance of opportunities both for good and for evil. Yet the young soul, being curious and hungry, views existence *a priori* under the form of the good; its instinct to live implies a faith that most things it can become or see or do will be worth while. Respect for quantity is accordingly something more than the childish joy and wonder at bigness; it is the fisherman's joy in a big haul, the good uses of which he can take for granted. Such optimism is amiable. Nature cannot afford that we should begin by being too calculating or wise, and she encourages us by the pleasure she attaches to our functions in advance of their fruits, and often in excess of them; as the angler enjoys catching his fish more than eating it, and often, waiting patiently for the fish to bite, misses his own supper. The pioneer must devote himself to preparations; he must work for the future, and it is healthy and dutiful of him to love his work for its own sake. At the same time, unless reference to an ultimate purpose is at least virtual in all his activities, he runs the

danger of becoming a living automaton, vain and ignominious in its mechanical constancy. Idealism about work can hide an intense materialism about life. Man, if he is a rational being, cannot live by bread alone nor be a labourer merely; he must eat and work in view of an ideal harmony which overarches all his days, and which is realised in the way they hang together, or in some ideal issue which they have in common. Otherwise, though his technical philosophy may call itself idealism, he is a materialist in morals; he esteems things, and esteems himself, for mechanical uses and energies. Even sensualists, artists, and pleasure-lovers are wiser than that, for though their idealism may be desultory or corrupt, they attain something ideal, and prize things only for their living effects, moral though perhaps fugitive. Sensation, when we do not take it as a signal for action, but arrest and peruse what it positively brings before us, reveals something ideal—a colour, shape, or sound; and to dwell on these presences, with no thought of their material significance, is an æsthetic or dreamful idealism. To pass from this idealism to the knowledge

of matter is a great intellectual advance, and goes with dominion over the world; for in the practical arts the mind is adjusted to a larger object, with more depth and potentiality in it; which is what makes people feel that the material world is real, as they call it, and that the ideal world is not. Certainly the material world is real; for the philosophers who deny the existence of matter are like the critics who deny the existence of Homer. If there was never any Homer, there must have been a lot of other poets no less Homeric than he; and if matter does not exist, a combination of other things exists which is just as material. But the intense reality of the material world would not prevent it from being a dreary waste in our eyes, or even an abyss of horror, if it brought forth no spiritual fruits. In fact, it does bring forth spiritual fruits, for otherwise we should not be here to find fault with it, and to set up our ideals over against it. Nature is material, but not materialistic; it issues in life, and breeds all sorts of warm passions and idle beauties. And just as sympathy with the mechanical travail and turmoil of nature, apart from its spiritual

fruits, is moral materialism, so the continual perception and love of these fruits is moral idealism—happiness in the presence of immaterial objects and harmonies, such as we envisage in affection, speculation, religion, and all the forms of the beautiful.

The circumstances of his life hitherto have necessarily driven the American into moral materialism; for in his dealings with material things he can hardly stop to enjoy their sensible aspects, which are ideal, nor proceed at once to their ultimate uses, which are ideal too. He is practical as against the poet, and worldly as against the clear philosopher or the saint. The most striking expression of this materialism is usually supposed to be his love of the almighty dollar; but that is a foreign and unintelligent view. The American talks about money, because that is the symbol and measure he has at hand for success, intelligence, and power; but as to money itself he makes, loses, spends, and gives it away with a very light heart. To my mind the most striking expression of his materialism is his singular preoccupation with quantity. If, for instance, you visit Niagara Falls, you may

expect to hear how many cubic feet or metric tons of water are precipitated per second over the cataract; how many cities and towns (with the number of their inhabitants) derive light and motive power from it; and the annual value of the further industries that might very well be carried on by the same means, without visibly depleting the world's greatest wonder or injuring the tourist trade. That is what I confidently expected to hear on arriving at the adjoining town of Buffalo; but I was deceived. The first thing I heard instead was that there are more miles of asphalt pavement in Buffalo than in any city in the world. Nor is this insistence on quantity confined to men of business. The President of Harvard College, seeing me once by chance soon after the beginning of a term, inquired how my classes were getting on; and when I replied that I thought they were getting on well, that my men seemed to be keen and intelligent, he stopped me as if I was about to waste his time. "I meant," said he, "*what is the number* of students in your classes."

Here I think we may perceive that this

love of quantity often has a silent partner, which is diffidence as to quality. The democratic conscience recoils before anything that savours of privilege; and lest it should concede an unmerited privilege to any pursuit or person, it reduces all things as far as possible to the common denominator of quantity. Numbers cannot lie: but if it came to comparing the ideal beauties of philosophy with those of Anglo-Saxon, who should decide? All studies are good—why else have universities?—but those must be most encouraged which attract the greatest number of students. Hence the President's question. Democratic faith, in its diffidence about quality, throws the reins of education upon the pupil's neck, as Don Quixote threw the reins on the neck of Rocinante, and bids his divine instinct choose its own way.

The American has never yet had to face the trials of Job. Great crises, like the Civil War, he has known how to surmount victoriously; and now that he has surmounted a second great crisis victoriously, it is possible that he may relapse, as he did in the other case, into an apparently complete absorption

in material enterprise and prosperity. But if serious and irremediable tribulation ever overtook him, what would his attitude be? It is then that we should be able to discover whether materialism or idealism lies at the base of his character. Meantime his working mind is not without its holiday. He spreads humour pretty thick and even over the surface of conversation, and humour is one form of moral emancipation. He loves landscape, he loves mankind, and he loves knowledge; and in music at least he finds an art which he unfeignedly enjoys. In music and landscape, in humour and kindness, he touches the ideal more truly, perhaps, than in his ponderous academic idealisms and busy religions; for it is astonishing how much even religion in America (can it possibly be so in England?) is a matter of meetings, building-funds, schools, charities, clubs, and picnics. To be poor in order to be simple, to produce less in order that the product may be more choice and beautiful, and may leave us less burdened with unnecessary duties and useless possessions—that is an ideal not articulate in the American mind; yet here and there I seem to have

heard a sigh after it, a groan at the perpetual incubus of business and shrill society. Significant witness to such aspirations is borne by those new forms of popular religion, not mere variations on tradition, which have sprung up from the soil—revivalism, spiritualism, Christian Science, the New Thought. Whether or no we can tap, through these or other channels, some cosmic or inner energy not hitherto at the disposal of man (and there is nothing incredible in that), we certainly may try to remove friction and waste in the mere process of living; we may relax morbid strains, loosen suppressed instincts, iron out the creases of the soul, discipline ourselves into simplicity, sweetness, and peace. These religious movements are efforts toward such physiological economy and hygiene; and while they are thoroughly plebeian, with no great lights, and no idea of raising men from the most vulgar and humdrum worldly existence, yet they see the possibility of physical and moral health on that common plane, and pursue it. That is true morality. The dignities of various types of life or mind, like the gifts of various animals, are relative. The snob adores one

type only, and the creatures supposed by him to illustrate it perfectly; or envies and hates them, which is just as snobbish. Veritable lovers of life, on the contrary, like Saint Francis or like Dickens, know that in every tenement of clay, with no matter what endowment or station, happiness and perfection are possible to the soul. There must be no brow-beating, with shouts of work or progress or revolution, any more than with threats of hell-fire. What does it profit a man to free the whole world if his soul is not free? Moral freedom is not an artificial condition, because the ideal is the mother tongue of both the heart and the senses. All that is requisite is that we should pause in living to enjoy life, and should lift up our hearts to things that are pure goods in themselves, so that once to have found and loved them, whatever else may betide, may remain a happiness that nothing can sully. This natural idealism does not imply that we are immaterial, but only that we are animate and truly alive. When the senses are sharp, as they are in the American, they are already half liberated, already a joy in themselves; and when the heart is warm, like his, and

eager to be just, its ideal destiny can hardly be doubtful. It will not be always merely pumping and working; time and its own pulses will lend it wings.

CHAPTER VII

ENGLISH LIBERTY IN AMERICA

THE straits of Dover, which one may sometimes see across, have sufficed so to isolate England that it has never moved quite in step with the rest of Europe in politics, morals, or art. No wonder that the Atlantic Ocean, although it has favoured a mixed emigration and cheap intercourse, should have cut off America so effectually that all the people there, even those of Latin origin, have become curiously different from any kind of European. In vain are they reputed to have the same religions or to speak the same languages as their cousins in the old world; everything has changed its accent, spirit, and value. Flora and fauna have been intoxicated by that untouched soil and fresh tonic air, and by those vast spaces; in spite of their hereditary differences of species

they have all acquired the same crude savour and defiant aspect. In comparison with their European prototypes they seem tough, meagre, bold, and ugly. In the United States, apart from the fact that most of the early colonists belonged to an exceptional type of Englishman, the scale and speed of life have made everything strangely un-English. There is cheeriness instead of doggedness, confidence instead of circumspection; there is a desire to quizz and to dazzle rather than a fear of being mistaken or of being shocked; there is a pervasive cordiality, exaggeration, and farcical humour; and in the presence of the Englishman, when by chance he turns up or is thought of, there is an invincible impatience and irritation that his point of view should be so fixed, his mind so literal, and the freight he carries so excessive (when you are sailing in ballast yourself), and that he should seem to take so little notice of changes in the wind to which you are nervously sensitive.

Nevertheless there is one gift or habit, native to England, that has not only been preserved in America unchanged, but has found there a more favourable atmosphere

in which to manifest its true nature—I mean the spirit of free co-operation. The root of it is free individuality, which is deeply seated in the English inner man; there is an indomitable instinct or mind in him which he perpetually consults and reveres, slow and embarrassed as his expression of it may be. But this free individuality in the Englishman is crossed and biased by a large residue of social servitude. The church and the aristocracy, entanglement in custom and privilege, mistrust and bitterness about particular grievances, warp the inner man and enlist him against his interests in alien causes; the straits of Dover were too narrow, the shadow of a hostile continent was too oppressive, the English sod was soaked with too many dews and cut by too many hedges, for each individual, being quite master of himself, to confront every other individual without fear or prejudice, and to unite with him in the free pursuit of whatever aims they might find that they had in common. Yet this slow co-operation of free men, this liberty in democracy—the only sort that America possesses or believes in—is wholly English in its personal basis, its reserve, its tenacity,

its empiricism, its public spirit, and its assurance of its own rightness; and it deserves to be called English always, to whatever countries it may spread.

The omnipresence in America of this spirit of co-operation, responsibility, and growth is very remarkable. Far from being neutralised by American dash and bravura, or lost in the opposite instincts of so many alien races, it seems to be adopted at once in the most mixed circles and in the most novel predicaments. In America social servitude is reduced to a minimum; in fact we may almost say that it is reduced to subjecting children to their mothers and to a common public education, agencies that are absolutely indispensable to produce the individual and enable him to exercise his personal initiative effectually; for after all, whatever metaphysical egotism may say, one cannot vote to be created. But once created, weaned, and taught to read and write, the young American can easily shoulder his knapsack and choose his own way in the world. He is as yet very little trammelled by want of opportunity, and he has no roots to speak of in place, class, or religion. Where indi-

viduality is so free, co-operation, when it is justified, can be all the more quick and hearty. Everywhere co-operation is taken for granted, as something that no one would be so mean or so short-sighted as to refuse. Together with the will to work and to prosper, it is of the essence of Americanism, and is accepted as such by all the unkempt polyglot peoples that turn to the new world with the pathetic but manly purpose of beginning life on a new principle. Every political body, every public meeting, every club, or college, or athletic team, is full of it. Out it comes whenever there is an accident in the street or a division in a church, or a great unexpected emergency like the late war. The general instinct is to run and help, to assume direction, to pull through somehow by mutual adaptation, and by seizing on the readiest practical measures and working compromises. Each man joins in and gives a helping hand, without a preconceived plan or a prior motive. Even the leader, when he is a natural leader and not a professional, has nothing up his sleeve to force on the rest, in their obvious good-will and mental blankness. All meet in a genuine spirit of consultation, eager to persuade but

ready to be persuaded, with a cheery confidence in their average ability, when a point comes up and is clearly put before them, to decide it for the time being, and to move on. It is implicitly agreed, in every case, that disputed questions shall be put to a vote, and that the minority will loyally acquiesce in the decision of the majority and build henceforth upon it, without a thought of ever retracting it.

Such a way of proceeding seems in America a matter of course, because it is bred in the bone, or imposed by that permeating social contagion which is so irresistible in a natural democracy. But if we consider human nature at large and the practice of most nations, we shall see that it is a very rare, wonderful, and unstable convention. It implies a rather unimaginative optimistic assumption that at bottom all men's interests are similar and compatible, and a rather heroic public spirit —such that no special interest, in so far as it has to be overruled, shall rebel and try to maintain itself absolutely. In America hitherto these conditions happen to have been actually fulfilled in an unusual measure. Interests have been very similar—to exploit

business opportunities and organise public services useful to all; and these similar interests have been also compatible and harmonious. A neighbour, even a competitor, where the field is so large and so little pre-empted, has more often proved a resource than a danger. The rich have helped the public more than they have fleeced it, and they have been emulated more than hated or served by the enterprising poor. To abolish millionaires would have been to dash one's own hopes. The most opposite systems of religion and education could look smilingly upon one another's prosperity, because the country could afford these superficial luxuries, having a constitutional religion and education of its own, which everybody drank in unconsciously and which assured the moral cohesion of the people. Impulses of reason and kindness, which are potential in all men, under such circumstances can become effective; people can help one another with no great sacrifice to themselves, and minorities can dismiss their special plans without sorrow, and cheerfully follow the crowd down another road. It was because life in America was naturally more co-

operative and more plastic than in England that the spirit of English liberty, which demands co-operation and plasticity, could appear there more boldly and universally than it ever did at home.

English liberty is a method, not a goal. It is related to the value of human life very much as the police are related to public morals or commerce to wealth; and it is no accident that the Anglo-Saxon race excels in commerce and in the commercial as distinguished from the artistic side of industry, and that having policed itself successfully it is beginning to police the world at large. It is all an eminence in temper, good-will, reliability, accommodation. Probably some other races, such as the Jews and Arabs, make individually better merchants, more shrewd, patient, and loving of their art. Englishmen and Americans often seem to miss or force opportunities, to play for quick returns, or to settle down into ponderous corporations; for successful men they are not particularly observant, constant, or economical. But the superiority of the Oriental is confined to his private craft; he has not the spirit of partnership. In English

civilisation the individual is neutralised; it does not matter so much even in high places if he is rather stupid or rather cheap; public spirit sustains him, and he becomes its instrument all the more readily, perhaps, for not being very distinguished or clear-headed in himself. The community prospers; comfort and science, good manners and generous feelings are diffused among the people, without the aid of that foresight and cunning direction which sometimes give a temporary advantage to a rival system like the German. In the end, adaptation to the world at large, where so much is hidden and unintelligible, is only possible piecemeal, by groping with a genuine indetermination in one's aims. Its very looseness gives the English method its lien on the future. To dominate the world co-operation is better than policy, and empiricism safer than inspiration. Anglo-Saxon imperialism is unintended; military conquests are incidental to it and often not maintained; it subsists by a mechanical equilibrium of habits and interests, in which every colony, province, or protectorate has a different status. It has a commercial and missionary quality, and is essentially an

invitation to pull together—an invitation which many nations may be incapable of accepting or even of understanding, or which they may deeply scorn, because it involves a surrender of absolute liberty on their part; but whether accepted or rejected, it is an offer of co-operation, a project for a limited partnership, not a complete plan of life to be imposed on anybody.

It is a wise instinct, in dealing with foreigners or with material things (which are foreigners to the mind), to limit oneself in this way to establishing external relations, partial mutual adjustments, with a great residuum of independence and reserve; if you attempt more you will achieve less; your interpretations will become chimerical and your regimen odious. So deep-seated is this prudent instinct in the English nature that it appears even at home; most of the concrete things which English genius has produced are expedients. Its spiritual treasures are hardly possessions, except as character is a possession; they are rather a standard of life, a promise, an insurance. English poetry and fiction form an exception; the very incoherence and artlessness which

they share with so much else that is English lend them an absolute value as an expression. They are the mirror and prattle of the inner man—a boyish spirit astray in the green earth it loves, rich in wonder, perplexity, valour, and faith, given to opinionated little prejudices, but withal sensitive and candid, and often laden, as in *Hamlet*, with exquisite music, tender humour, and tragic self-knowledge. But apart from the literature that simply utters the inner man, no one considering the English language, the English church, or English philosophy, or considering the common law and parliamentary government, would take them for perfect realisations of art or truth or an ideal polity. Institutions so jumbled and limping could never have been planned; they can never be transferred to another setting, or adopted bodily; but special circumstances and contrary currents have given them birth, and they are accepted and prized, where they are native, for keeping the door open to a great volume and variety of goods, at a moderate cost of danger and absurdity.

Of course no product of mind is *merely* an expedient; all are concomitantly expres-

sions of temperament; there is something in their manner of being practical which is poetical and catches the rhythm of the heart. In this way anything foreign—and almost all the elements of civilisation in England and America are foreign—when it is adopted and acclimatised, takes on a native accent, especially on English lips; like the Latin words in the language, it becomes thoroughly English in texture. The English Bible, again, with its archaic homeliness and majesty, sets the mind brooding, not less than the old ballad most redolent of the native past and the native imagination; it fills the memory with solemn and pungent phrases; and this incidental spirit of poetry in which it comes to be clothed is a self-revelation perhaps more pertinent and welcome to the people than the alien revelations it professes to transmit. English law and parliaments, too, would be very unjustly judged if judged as practical contrivances only; they satisfy at the same time the moral interest people have in uttering and enforcing their feelings. These institutions are ceremonious, almost sacramental; they are instinct with a dramatic spirit deeper

and more vital than their utility. Englishmen and Americans love debate; they love sitting round a table as if in consultation, even when the chairman has pulled the wires and settled everything beforehand, and when each of the participants listens only to his own remarks and votes according to his party. They love committees and commissions; they love public dinners with after-dinner speeches, those stammering compounds of facetiousness, platitude, and business. How distressing such speeches usually are, and how helplessly prolonged, does not escape anybody; yet every one demands them notwithstanding, because in pumping them up or sitting through them he feels he is leading the political life. A public man must show himself in public, even if not to advantage. The moral expressiveness of such institutions also helps to redeem their clumsy procedure; they would not be useful, nor work at all as they should, if people did not smack their lips over them and feel a profound pleasure in carrying them out. Without the English spirit, without the faculty of making themselves believe in public what they never feel in private, with-

out the habit of clubbing together and facing facts, and feeling duty in a cautious, consultative, experimental way, English liberties forfeit their practical value; as we see when they are extended to a volatile histrionic people like the Irish, or when a jury in France, instead of pronouncing simply on matters of fact and the credibility of witnesses, rushes in the heat of its patriotism to carry out, by its verdict, some political policy.

The practice of English liberty presupposes two things: that all concerned are fundamentally unanimous, and that each has a plastic nature, which he is willing to modify. If fundamental unanimity is lacking and all are not making in the same general direction, there can be no honest co-operation, no satisfying compromise. Every concession, under such circumstances, would be a temporary one, to be retracted at the first favourable moment; it would amount to a mutilation of one's essential nature, a partial surrender of life, liberty, and happiness, tolerable for a time, perhaps, as the lesser of two evils, but involving a perpetual sullen opposition and hatred. To put things

to a vote, and to accept unreservedly the decision of the majority, are points essential to the English system; but they would be absurd if fundamental agreement were not presupposed. Every decision that the majority could conceivably arrive at must leave it still possible for the minority to live and prosper, even if not exactly in the way they wished. Were this not the case, a decision by vote would be as alien a fatality to any minority as the decree of a foreign tyrant, and at every election the right of rebellion would come into play. In a hearty and sound democracy all questions at issue must be minor matters; fundamentals must have been silently agreed upon and taken for granted when the democracy arose. To leave a decision to the majority is like leaving it to chance—a fatal procedure unless one is willing to have it either way. You must be able to risk losing the toss; and if you do you will acquiesce all the more readily in the result, because, unless the winners cheated at the game, they had no more influence on it than yourself—namely none, or very little. You acquiesce in democracy on the same conditions and for the same reasons,

and perhaps a little more cheerfully, because there is an infinitesimally better chance of winning on the average; but even then the enormity of the risk involved would be intolerable if anything of vital importance was at stake. It is therefore actually required that juries, whose decisions may really be of moment, should be unanimous; and parliaments and elections are never more satisfactory than when a wave of national feeling runs through them and there is no longer any minority nor any need of voting.

Free government works well in proportion as government is superfluous. That most parliamentary measures should be trivial or technical, and really devised and debated only in government offices, and that government in America should so long have been carried on in the shade, by persons of no name or dignity, is no anomaly. On the contrary, like the good fortune of those who never hear of the police, it is all a sign that co-operative liberty is working well and rendering overt government unnecessary. Sometimes kinship and opportunity carry a whole nation before the wind; but this

happy unison belongs rather to the dawn of national life, when similar tasks absorb all individual energies. If it is to be maintained after lines of moral cleavage appear, and is to be compatible with variety and distinction of character, all further developments must be democratically controlled and must remain, as it were, in a state of fusion. Variety and distinction must not become arbitrary and irresponsible. They must take directions that will not mar the general harmony, and no interest must be carried so far as to lose sight of the rest. Science and art, in such a vital democracy, should remain popular, helpful, bracing; religion should be broadly national and in the spirit of the times. The variety and distinction allowed must be only variety and distinction of service. If they ever became a real distinction and variety of life, if they arrogated to themselves an absolute liberty, they would shatter the unity of the democratic spirit and destroy its moral authority.

The levelling tendency of English liberty (inevitable if plastic natures are to co-operate and to make permanent concessions to one another's instincts) comes out more clearly

in America than in England itself. In England there are still castles and rural retreats, there are still social islands within the Island, where special classes may nurse particular allegiances. America is all one prairie, swept by a universal tornado. Although it has always thought itself in an eminent sense the land of freedom, even when it was covered with slaves, there is no country in which people live under more overpowering compulsions. The prohibitions, although important and growing, are not yet, perhaps, so many or so blatant as in some other countries; but prohibitions are less galling than compulsions. What can be forbidden specifically—bigamy, for instance, or heresy—may be avoided by a prudent man without renouncing the whole movement of life and mind which, if carried beyond a certain point, would end in those trespasses against convention. He can indulge in hypothesis or gallantry without falling foul of the positive law, which indeed may even stimulate his interest and ingenuity by suggesting some indirect means of satisfaction. On the other hand, what is exacted cuts deeper; it creates habits which overlay

nature, and every faculty is atrophied that does not conform with them. If, for instance, I am compelled to be in an office (and up to business, too) from early morning to late afternoon, with long journeys in thundering and sweltering trains before and after and a flying shot at a quick lunch between, I am caught and held both in soul and body; and except for the freedom to work and to rise by that work—which may be very interesting in itself—I am not suffered to exist morally at all. My evenings will be drowsy, my Sundays tedious, and after a few days' holiday I shall be wishing to get back to business. Here is as narrow a path left open to freedom as is left open in a monastic establishment, where bell and book keep your attention fixed at all hours upon the hard work of salvation—an infinite vista, certainly, if your soul was not made to look another way. Those, too, who may escape this crushing routine—the invalids, the ladies, the fops—are none the less prevented by it from doing anything else with success or with a good conscience; the bubbles also must swim with the stream. Even what is best in American life is com-

pulsory—the idealism, the zeal, the beautiful happy unison of its great moments. You must wave, you must cheer, you must push with the irresistible crowd; otherwise you will feel like a traitor, a soulless outcast, a deserted ship high and dry on the shore. In America there is but one way of being saved, though it is not peculiar to any of the official religions, which themselves must silently conform to the national orthodoxy, or else become impotent and merely ornamental. This national faith and morality are vague in idea, but inexorable in spirit; they are the gospel of work and the belief in progress. By them, in a country where all men are free, every man finds that what most matters has been settled for him beforehand.

Nevertheless, American life *is* free as a whole, because it is mobile, because every atom that swims in it has a momentum of its own which is felt and respected throughout the mass, like the weight of an atom in the solar system, even if the deflection it may cause is infinitesimal. In temper America is docile and not at all tyrannical; it has not predetermined its career, and its

merciless momentum is a passive resultant. Like some Mississippi or Niagara, it rolls its myriad drops gently onward, being but the suction and pressure which they exercise on one another. Any tremulous thought or playful experiment anywhere may be a first symptom of great changes, and may seem to precipitate the cataract in a new direction. Any snowflake in a boy's sky may become the centre for his *boule de neige*, his prodigious fortune; but the monster will melt as easily as it grew, and leaves nobody poorer for having existed. In America there is duty everywhere, but everywhere also there is light. I do not mean superior understanding or even moderately wide knowledge, but openness to light, an evident joy in seeing things clearly and doing them briskly, which would amount to a veritable triumph of art and reason if the affairs in which it came into play were central and important. The American may give an exorbitant value to subsidiary things, but his error comes of haste in praising what he possesses, and trusting the first praises he hears. He can detect sharp practices, because he is capable of them,

but vanity or wickedness in the ultimate aims of a man, including himself, he cannot detect, because he is ingenuous in that sphere. He thinks life splendid and blameless, without stopping to consider how far folly and malice may be inherent in it. He feels that he himself has nothing to dread, nothing to hide or apologise for; and if he is arrogant in his ignorance, there is often a twinkle in his eye when he is most boastful. Perhaps he suspects that he is making a fool of himself, and he challenges the world to prove it; and his innocence is quickly gone when he is once convinced that it exists. Accordingly the American orthodoxy, though imperious, is not unyielding. It has a keener sense for destiny than for policy. It is confident of a happy and triumphant future, which it would be shameful in any man to refuse to work for and to share; but it cannot prefigure what that bright future is to be. While it works feverishly in outward matters, inwardly it only watches and waits; and it feels tenderly towards the unexpressed impulses in its bosom, like a mother towards her unborn young.

There is a mystical conviction, expressed in Anglo-Saxon life and philosophy, that our labours, even when they end in failure, contribute to some ulterior achievement in which it is well they should be submerged. This Anglo-Saxon piety, in the form of trust and adaptability, reaches somewhat the same insight that more speculative religions have reached through asceticism, the insight that we must renounce our wills and deny ourselves. But to have a will remains essential to animals, and having a will we must kick against the pricks, even if philosophy thinks it foolish of us. The spirit in which parties and nations beyond the pale of English liberty confront one another is not motherly nor brotherly nor Christian. Their valorousness and morality consist in their indomitable egotism. The liberty they want is absolute liberty, a desire which is quite primitive. It may be identified with the love of life which animates all creation, or with the pursuit of happiness which all men would be engaged in if they were rational. Indeed, it might even be identified with the first law of motion, that all bodies, if left free, persevere in that state of rest, or of

motion in a straight line, in which they happen to find themselves. The enemies of this primitive freedom are all such external forces as make it deviate from the course it is in the habit of taking or is inclined to take; and when people begin to reflect upon their condition, they protest against this alien tyranny, and contrast in fancy what they would do if they were free with what under duress they are actually doing. All human struggles are inspired by what, in this sense, is the love of freedom. Even craving for power and possessions may be regarded as the love of a free life on a larger scale, for which more instruments and resources are needed. The apologists of absolute will are not slow, for instance, to tell us that Germany in her laborious ambitions has been pursuing the highest form of freedom, which can be attained only by organising all the resources of the world, and the souls of all subsidiary nations, around one luminous centre of direction and self-consciousness, such as the Prussian government was eminently fitted to furnish. Freedom to exercise absolute will methodically seems to them much better than

English liberty, because it knows what it wants, pursues it intelligently, and does not rely for success on some measure of goodness in mankind at large. English liberty is so trustful! It moves by a series of checks, mutual concessions, and limited satisfactions; it counts on chivalry, sportsmanship, brotherly love, and on that rarest and least lucrative of virtues, fair-mindedness: it is a broad-based, stupid, blind adventure, groping towards an unknown goal. Who but an Englishman would think of such a thing! A fanatic, a poet, a doctrinaire, a dilettante—any one who has a fixed aim and clear passions—will not relish English liberty. It will seem bitter irony to him to give the name of liberty to something so muffled, exacting, and oppressive. In fact English liberty is a positive infringement and surrender of the freedom most fought for and most praised in the past. It makes impossible the sort of liberty for which the Spartans died at Thermopylæ, or the Christian martyrs in the arena, or the Protestant reformers at the stake; for these people all died because they would not co-operate, because they were not plastic and would never consent to lead

the life dear or at least customary to other men. They insisted on being utterly different and independent and inflexible in their chosen systems, and aspired either to destroy the society round them or at least to insulate themselves in the midst of it, and live a jealous, private, unstained life of their own within their city walls or mystical conclaves. Any one who passionately loves his particular country or passionately believes in his particular religion cannot be content with less liberty or more democracy than that; he must be free to live absolutely according to his ideal, and no hostile votes, no alien interests, must call on him to deviate from it by one iota. Such was the claim to religious liberty which has played so large a part in the revolutions and divisions of the western world. Every new heresy professed to be orthodoxy itself, purified and restored; and woe to all backsliders from the reformed faith! Even the popes, without thinking to be ironical, have often raised a wail for liberty. Such too was the aspiration of those mediæval cities and barons who fought for their liberties and rights. Such was the aspiration even of the American declaration of independence

and the American constitution: cast-iron documents, if only the spirit of co-operative English liberty had not been there to expand, embosom, soften, or transform them. So the French revolution and the Russian one of to-day have aimed at establishing society once for all on some eternally just principle, and at abolishing all traditions, interests, faiths, and even words that did not belong to their system. Liberty, for all these pensive or rabid apostles of liberty, meant liberty for themselves to be just so, and to remain just so for ever, together with the most vehement defiance of anybody who might ask them, for the sake of harmony, to be a little different. They summoned every man to become free in exactly their own fashion, or have his head cut off.

Of course, to many an individual, life even in any such free city or free church, fiercely jealous of its political independence and moral purity, would prove to be a grievous servitude; and there has always been a sprinkling of rebels and martyrs and scornful philosophers protesting and fuming against their ultra-independent and nothing-if-not-

protesting sects. To co-operate with anybody seems to these *esprits forts* contamination, so sensitive are they to any deviation from the true north which their compass might suffer through the neighbourhood of any human magnet. If it is a weakness to be subject to influence, it is an imprudence to expose oneself to it; and to be subject to influence seems ignominious to any one whose inward monitor is perfectly articulate and determined. A certain vagueness of soul, together with a great gregariousness and tendency to be moulded by example and by prevalent opinion, is requisite for feeling free under English liberty. You must find the majority right enough to live with; you must give up lost causes; you must be willing to put your favourite notions to sleep in the family cradle of convention. Enthusiasts for democracy, peace, and a league of nations should not deceive themselves; they are not everybody's friends; they are the enemies of what is deepest and most primitive in everybody. They inspire undying hatred in every untamable people and every absolute soul.

It is in the nature of wild animal life to

be ferocious or patient, and in either case heroic and uncompromising. It is inevitable, in the beginning, that each person or faction should come into the lists to serve some express interest, which in itself may be perfectly noble and generous. But these interests are posited alone and in all their ultimate consequences. The parties meet, however diplomatic their procedure, as buyers and sellers bargain in primitive markets. Each has a fixed programme or, as he perhaps calls it, an ideal; and when he has got as much as he can get to-day, he will return to the charge to-morrow, with absolutely unchanged purpose. All opposed parties he regards as sheer enemies to be beaten down, driven off, and ultimately converted or destroyed. Meantime he practises political craft, of which the climax is war; a craft not confined to priests, though they are good at it, but common to every missionary, agitator, and philosophical politician who operates in view of some vested interest or inflexible plan, in the very un-English spirit of intrigue, cajolery, eloquence, and dissimulation. His art is to worm his way forward, using people's passions to further

his own ends, carrying them off their feet in a wave of enthusiasm, when that is feasible, and when it is not, recommending his cause by insidious half-measures, flattery of private interests, confidence-tricks, and amiable suggestions, until he has put his entangled victims in his pocket; or when he feels strong enough, brow-beating and intimidating them into silence. Such is the inevitable practice of every prophet who heralds an absolute system, political or religious, and who pursues the unqualified domination of principles which he thinks right in themselves and of a will which is self-justified and irresponsible.

Why, we may ask, are people so ready to set up absolute claims, when their resources are obviously so limited that permanent success is impossible, and their will itself, in reality, is so fragile that it abandons each of its dreams even before it learns that it cannot be realised? The reason is that the feebler, more ignorant, and more childlike an impulse is, the less it can restrain itself or surrender a part of its desire in order the better to attain the rest. In most nations and most philosophies the intellect is rushed; it is

swept forward and enamoured by the first glimpses it gets of anything good. The dogmas thus precipitated seem to relieve the will of all risks and to guarantee its enterprises; whereas in fact they are rendering every peril tragic by blinding us to it, and every vain hope incorrigible. A happy shyness in the English mind, a certain torpor and lateness in its utterance, have largely saved it from this calamity, and just because it is not brilliant it is safe. Being reticent, it remains fertile; being vague in its destination, it can turn at each corner down the most inviting road. In this race the intellect has chosen the part of prudence, leaving courage to the will, where courage is indispensable. How much more becoming and fortunate is this balance of faculties for an earthly being than an intellect that scales the heavens, refuting and proving everything, while the will dares to attempt and to reform nothing, but fritters itself away in sloth, petty malice, and irony! In the English character modesty and boldness appear in the right places and in a just measure. Manliness ventures to act without pretending to be sure of the issue; it does not cry that

all is sure, in order to cover up the mortal perils of finitude; and manliness has its reward in the joys of exploration and comradeship.

It is this massive malleable character, this vigorous moral youth, that renders co-operation possible and progressive. When interests are fully articulate and fixed, co-operation is a sort of mathematical problem; up to a certain precise limit, people can obviously help one another by summing their efforts, like sailors pulling at a rope, or by a division of labour; they can obviously help one another when thereby they are helping themselves. But beyond that, there can be nothing but mutual indifference or eternal hostility. This is the old way of the world. Most of the lower animals, although they run through surprising transformations during their growth, seem to reach maturity by a predetermined method and in a predetermined form. Nature does everything for them and experience nothing, and they live or die, as the case may be, true to their innate character. Mankind, on the contrary, and especially the English races, seem to reach physical maturity still morally im-

mature; they need to be finished by education, experience, external influences. What so often spoils other creatures improves them. If left to themselves and untrained, they remain all their lives stupid and coarse, with no natural joy but drunkenness; but nurseries and schools and churches and social conventions can turn them into the most refined and exquisite of men, and admirably intelligent too, in a cautious and special fashion. They may never become, for all their pains, so agile, graceful, and sure as many an animal or *a priori* man is without trouble, but they acquire more representative minds and a greater range of material knowledge. Such completion, in the open air, of characters only half-formed in the womb may go on in some chance direction, or it may go on in the direction of a greater social harmony, that is, in whatever direction is suggested to each man by the suasion of his neighbours. Society is a second mother to these souls; and the instincts of many animals would remain inchoate if the great instinct of imitation did not intervene and enable them to learn by example. Development in this case involves assimilation;

characters are moulded by contagion and educated by democracy. The sphere of unanimity tends to grow larger, and to reduce the margin of diversity to insignificance. The result is an ever-increasing moral unison, which is the simplest form of moral harmony and emotionally the most coercive.

Democracy is often mentioned in the same breath with liberty, as if they meant the same thing; and both are sometimes identified with the sort of elective government that prevails in Great Britain and the United States. But just as English liberty seems servitude to some people because it requires them to co-operate, to submit to the majority, and to grow like them, so English democracy seems tyranny to the wayward masses, because it is constitutional, historical, and sacred, narrowing down the power of any group of people at any time to voting for one of two or three candidates for office, or to saying yes or no to some specific proposal—both the proposals and the candidates being set before them by an invisible agency; and fate was never more inexorable or blinder than is the grinding of this ponderous political

mill, where routine, nepotism, pique, and swagger, with love of office and money, turn all the wheels. And the worst of it is that the revolutionary parties that oppose this historical machine repeat all its abuses, or even aggravate them. It would be well if people in England and America woke up to the fact that it is in the name of natural liberty and direct democracy that enemies both within and without are already rising up against their democracy and their liberty. Just as the Papacy once threatened English liberties, because it would maintain one inflexible international religion over all men, so now an international democracy of the disinherited many, led by the disinherited few, threatens English liberties again, since it would abolish those private interests which are the factors in any co-operation, and would reduce everybody to forced membership and forced service in one universal flock, without property, family, country, or religion. That life under such a system might have its comforts, its arts, and its atomic liberties, is certain, just as under the Catholic system it had its virtues and consolations; but both systems presuppose the universality of a type

of human nature which is not English, and perhaps not human.

The great advantage of English liberty is that it is in harmony with the nature of things; and when living beings have managed to adapt their habits to the nature of things, they have entered the path of health and wisdom. No doubt the living will is essentially absolute, both at the top and at the bottom, in the ferocious animal and in the rapt spirit; but it is absolute even then only in its deliverance, in what it asserts or demands; nothing can be less absolute or more precarious than the living will in its existence. A living will is the flexible voice of a thousand submerged impulses, of which now one and now another comes to the surface; it is responsive, without knowing it, to a complex forgotten past and a changing, unexplored environment. The will is a mass of passions; when it sets up absolute claims it is both tragic and ridiculous. It may be ready to be a martyr, but it will have to be one. Martyrs are heroic; but unless they have the nature of things on their side and their cause can be victorious, their heroism is like that of criminals and mad-

men, interesting dramatically but morally detestable. Madmen and criminals, like other martyrs, appeal to the popular imagination, because in each of us there is a little absolute will, or a colony of little absolute wills, aching to be criminal, mad, and heroic. Yet the equilibrium by which we exist if we are sane, and which we call reason, keeps these rebellious dreams under; if they run wild, we are lost. Reason is a harmony; and it has been reputed by egotistical philosophers to rule the world (in which unreason of every sort is fundamental and rampant), because when harmony between men and nature supervenes at any place or in any measure, the world becomes intelligible and safe, and philosophers are able to live in it. The passions, even in a rational society, remain the elements of life, but under mutual control, and the life of reason, like English liberty, is a perpetual compromise. Absolute liberty, on the contrary, is impracticable; it is a foolish challenge thrown by a new-born insect buzzing against the universe; it is incompatible with more than one pulse of life. All the declarations of independence in the world will not render anybody really

independent. You may disregard your environment, you cannot escape it; and your disregard of it will bring you moral impoverishment and some day unpleasant surprises. Even Robinson Crusoe—whom offended America once tried to imitate—lived on what he had saved from the wreck, on footprints and distant hopes. Liberty to be left alone, not interfered with and not helped, is not English liberty. It is the primeval desire of every wild animal or barbarous tribe or jealous city or religion, claiming to live and to tramp through the world in its own sweet way. These combative organisms, however, have only such strength as the opposite principle of co-operation lends them inwardly; and the more liberty they assume in foreign affairs the less liberty their members can enjoy at home. At home they must then have organisation at all costs, like ancient Sparta and modern Germany; and even if the restraints so imposed are not irksome and there is spontaneous unison and enthusiasm in the people, the basis of such a local harmony will soon prove too narrow. Nations and religions will run up against one another,

against change, against science, against all the realities they had never reckoned with; and more or less painfully they will dissolve. And it will not be a normal and fruitful dissolution, like that of a man who leaves children and heirs. It will be the end of that evolution, the choking of that ideal in the sand.

This collapse of fierce liberty is no ordinary mutation, such as time brings sooner or later to everything that exists, when the circumstances that sustained it in being no longer prevail. It is a deep tragedy, because the narrower passions and swifter harmonies are more beautiful and perfect than the chaos or the dull broad equilibrium that may take their place. Co-operative life is reasonable and long-winded; but it always remains imperfect itself, while it somewhat smothers the impulses that enter into it. Absolute liberty created these elements; inspiration, free intelligence, uncompromising conviction, a particular home and breeding-ground, were requisite to give them birth. Nothing good could arise for co-operation to diffuse or to qualify unless first there had been complete liberty for the artist and an uncontaminated

perfection in his work. Reason and the principle of English liberty have no creative afflatus; they presuppose spontaneity and yet they half stifle it; and they can rest in no form of perfection, because they must remain plastic and continually invite amendments, in order to continue broadly adjusted to an infinite moving world. Their work is accordingly like those cathedrals at which many successive ages have laboured, each in its own style. We may regret, sometimes, that some one design could not have been carried out in its purity, and yet all these secular accretions have a wonderful eloquence; a common piety and love of beauty have inspired them; age has fused them and softened their incongruities; and an inexpressible magic seems to hang about the composite pile, as if God and man breathed deeply within it. It is a harmony woven out of accidents, like every work of time and nature, and all the more profound and fertile because no mind could ever have designed it. Some such natural structure, formed and reformed by circumstances, is the requisite matrix and home for every moral being.

Accordingly there seems to have been

sober sense and even severe thought behind the rant of Webster when he cried, "Liberty *and* Union, now and for ever, one and inseparable!" because if for the sake of liberty you abandon union and resist a mutual adaptation of purposes which might cripple each of them, your liberty loses its massiveness, its plasticity, its power to survive change; it ceases to be tentative and human in order to become animal and absolute. Nature must always produce little irresponsible passions that will try to rule her, but she can never crown any one of them with more than a theatrical success; the wrecks of absolute empires, communisms, and religions are there to prove it. But English liberty, because it is co-operative, because it calls only for a partial and shifting unanimity among living men, may last indefinitely, and can enlist every reasonable man and nation in its service. This is the best heritage of America, richer than its virgin continents, which it draws from the temperate and manly spirit of England. Certainly absolute freedom would be more beautiful if we were birds or poets; but co-operation and a loving sacrifice of a part of ourselves—

or even of the whole, save the love in us—are beautiful too, if we are men living together. Absolute liberty and English liberty are incompatible, and mankind must make a painful and a brave choice between them. The necessity of rejecting and destroying some things that are beautiful is the deepest curse of existence.

THE END

Printed in Great Britain by R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED, *Edinburgh.*

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